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**VIOLENCE IN THE EARLY WRITINGS AND NOVELS OF ANDRE MALRAUX**

by

**DAVIDA BRAUTMAN**

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in French in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York.

1975

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in French in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## FOREWORD

"La violence des romans n'est pas gratuite, et n'est pas due seulement aux circonstances qui ont amené l'auteur à participer à des révolutions et à des guerres: il s'agit de contraindre l'homme à aller jusqu'au bout de lui-même."

(Joseph Hoffmann, L'Humanisme de Malraux)

### III

This study was born of an ardent desire to explore the relationship of André Malraux and violence, a relationship which endured more than a quarter of a century. The interest in such an exploration is generated by the eternal and monumental enigma of life, and its perpetual enemy, death. Malraux chose direct involvement with violence for he sensed it to be the only significant manner through which to defy man's enemies, death and the absurd. Violence became the supreme challenge of the "human condition;" intense activity supported man's battle to resist degradation, humiliation, oppression, torture: in effect, everything which was responsible for making man's lot intolerable, everything which made a victor of death or of the absurd. It is also noteworthy that André Malraux not only wrote of violent activity, but spent much of his life experiencing the different definitions of such activity, from his individual metaphysical revolt in the 1920's, to his willing acceptance of social commitment in the 1930's, and finally, to his grand deception about revolution and war in the 1940's.

Studies have been written on André Malraux and his esthetic works; there have also been dissertations written on Malraux and death. Articles have pointed to Malraux's use of symbols; others have compared him to T. E. Lawrence, to Joseph Conrad, and to other writers of both past and present. This study attempts to penetrate the hidden and violent world of a young man, a world which evidently provided direction and purpose to Malraux, a world which encouraged the young author to seek the meaning of his existence through his attack of the absurd, and tragic human condition

of twentieth century man. The violence in Malraux's works reveals much of Malraux to the reader: his frustrations are shared by all who see the "human condition" as tragic; his violent physical and metaphysical combat instructs others how not to succumb, how to resist oppression, how to seek freedom. It is hoped that this study can indicate the existence of yet another Malraux, an eager and intense man longing to quiet the Western spirit, not by drug-ging it, but by pursuing intoxicating activity.

Certain of the difficulties encountered with reference to the obtaining of some of the material, involved a lack of exact information on the childhood and adolescence of the author. In one sense, this lack of information permitted perhaps a freer interpretation of some of the incidents which the author lived. Some episodes and their outcomes are most probably known solely to the author. This does not prevent educated speculation. Another problem which arises involves the many possible reasons for Malraux's change from revolutionary to supporter of the "status quo" later in his life. His replacement of one "anti-destin" by what appears to be its contrary, is enigmatic.

This study does not wish to deal with violence in modern life or in literature in general. This subject is limited to one man's interaction with other men in war and in times of stress, and to his own crisis of self-awareness. It is both analytical and philosophical, often posing questions which all men ask of themselves and of each other. It stresses the real need felt by the author to live violence, to experience man's try at reaching beyond what is in his grasp. It hints of tragedy

as man's condition is tragic when man faces it; however, it announces the unceasing inventiveness of the author who, when faced with defeat, is capable of constructing a new way to dominate that human condition.

Perhaps it is biographical, but to know the author well, one need only read the pages of his life, after reading the pages of his novels. A certain empathy grows when one realizes that the fiction of the works is not entirely fiction, but a combination of the experiences actually lived by Malraux, and those created for his characters.

The reader will find some indication as to who influenced Malraux in the literary and artistic spheres. Again, the tastes of the author reveal much more than the fact that he possessed an avid desire to read. They reveal much to support the author's early inclination towards violence, and the specific figures who impressed the young, sensitive Malraux.

Finally, the various negative qualities of violence develop in the study, as they outlined themselves in the author's works, and in his life. They culminate in "la grande illusion," preparing the author for his eventual rejection of the concept by which he had lived for so many years.

## ABBREVIATIONS

For easy reference to the numerous quotations from the works of André Malraux, we have adopted the following system of abbreviations: the capital letters refer to the title of the work, and the numbers to the page of the extract.

- TO: LA TENTATION DE L'OCCIDENT
- JE: "D'UNE JEUNESSE EUROPEENNE"
- LP: LUNES EN PAPIER
- HA: "LES HERISSONS APPRIVOISES"
- PJM: "LE POMPIER DU JEU DE MASSACRE"
- EOP: "ECRIT POUR UN OURS EN PELUCHE"
- RF: ROYAUME FARFELU
- C: LES CONQUERANTS
- VR: LA VOIE ROYALE
- CH: LA CONDITION HUMAINE
- TM: LE TEMPS DU MEPRIS
- E: L'ESPOIR
- NA: LES NOYERS DE L'ALTENBURG
- S: SATURNE: ESSAI SUR GOYA
- TN: LE TRIANGLE NOIR: LACLOS, GOYA, SAINT-JUST
- A: ANTIMMOIRES

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## **INTRODUCTION**

"Par l'acte de violence, l'homme est saisi par l'être."

(Mugnier-Pollet, "Violence et morale," in Violence dans le Monde Actuel.)

"La violence réside dans l'intention de faire une victime et, a fortiori, dans la réalisation de cette intention."

(Bigard, La Violence.)

"La violence est une action directe ou indirecte, massée ou distribuée, destinée à porter atteinte à une personne ou à la détruire, soit dans son intégrité physique ou psychique, soit dans ses possessions, soit dans ses participations symboliques."

(Michaud, La Violence.)

"Nous appellerons violence l'explosion de la puissance qui s'attaque directement à la personne et aux biens des autres (individus ou collectivités) en vue de les dominer par la mort, par la destruction, la soumission ou la défaite."

(Freund, Spirale de violence.)  
[de Camara]

"La violence est à la fois contrainte, contrainte physique, torture, mais aussi torture morale, tourment, humiliation. Disons qu'elle est une tentative pour réduire l'autre, pour le contraindre à se renier, à se résigner à la situation qui lui est faite, à renoncer à toute lutte, à abdiquer. C'est une entreprise directement menée contre la liberté de l'autre."

(Jeanson, "Violence et non-violence," in Violence dans le Monde Actuel.)

This dissertation is concerned with violence in the early writings and novels of André Malraux. André Malraux spent more than a quarter of a century defending certain forms of violence and intense activity. Violence is much more complicated than a dictionary definition of it, as can be seen by the five interpretations of it on the cover sheet of the introduction. Violence is topical. It can be physical or metaphysical, but, in every case, it thrives on a victim - someone whose integrity is threatened, either physically, mentally, emotionally, or morally. It is reasonable to assume that all men will battle to defend their freedom and dignity, and prevent themselves from becoming the victims of others who must taste power and feel strong by crushing the weak. As man's condition is such that he is either victim or oppressor, the former's efforts are to liberate himself from the shackles of oppression, and he will use all possible means available to him; the latter will make use of the same means, only his aim is to perpetuate his dynasty of oppression.

Malraux's writings take him from the Orient to the West in search of appeasement. First, he attempts to escape man's condition, then he endeavors to combat it; finally, he will surmount it, in a unique manner, not satisfying to all of his readers and critics, but, apparently, affording some degree of contentment to the author. The East and the West meet in Malraux's works, as they do in the works of so many writers of the so-called "lost generation," for the twentieth century "mal du siècle," born of man's anguish in the face of the absurd,

and the knowledge of his inherent potential for evil, plagued (and continues to plague) the entire world.

\*  
\* \* \*

The author is accused of being ruled by his taste for blood; that his characters wander intoxicated, lusting after torture and futile heroism, scenting out mutilated flesh, and exalting in the triumph of one body over the total destruction of another.<sup>(1)</sup> Malraux's response is a simple and direct one: "Je n'ai pas eu à choisir la sauvagerie, car je l'ai rencontrée."<sup>(2)</sup> This is at the heart of all of Malraux's work: man is inherently and instinctively barbaric and violent; he takes pleasure in pain - that which he allows happen to him, and that which occurs with others. He can be totally indifferent to acts of violence as well; this is to be feared even more than the first attitude. At first, Malraux was intrigued by and enamored of the intensity of his life which changed when he engaged in individual violent acts - acts of defiance against traditional ways of thinking, functioning, etc. - and, as long as he remained creative in his intensity, his violence achieved and performed for him. However, most violence is not creative; it cannot genuinely challenge man's fate, which is what is necessary to metamorphose all men who are destiny's victims. At first, "la mort, la souffrance, l'érotisme, Malraux se sert de ces trois outils pour entreprendre une profonde opération chirurgicale et mettre à nu la condition de l'homme de notre temps en particulier et l'humaine condition en général."<sup>(3)</sup> However, after exposing men and their condition

to violence, it does not materialize into the panacea desired, for "le destin de la violence c'est la mort absolue, et non plus cette mort suivie d'une renaissance dont s'enivrait Nietzsche."

(4) Therefore, violence has to be rejected ultimately, for, if violence leads to death, instead of conquering death, then man remains the victim of his fate.

\* \* \*

Malraux engaged in various intense and violent activities, and then no longer engaged in them. The question arises as to the different stages of his thought and activity, was there an evolution in his thinking, and where, when, and why did he inevitably separate from a philosophy which he both practiced and preached for a long period of time?

This dissertation develops along the lines of both Malraux's life and his writings. The first part deals with the various adventures of the writer himself, commencing with his youth and terminating with the general condition of the author today. The first part also recalls the many writers and artists who might have influenced Malraux in his thinking.

The second section of the dissertation deals with the author's early writings, taking him through his essays filled with metaphysical anguish, and into his fantasy writings which resemble the works of a mind haunted and plagued with monumental distress. It also delves into the first two novels written by the author, exploring the individual's need for and commitment to violence, and his hunger and quest for power (over others

and over himself).

The third division involves the novels written by Malraux as a more mature man, first committed to revolutionary humanism - aspiring to truly assist his brothers in "virile fraternity." Then, the young adult engaged in authentic combat, discovers the actual nature of violence, and, in his last two novels, he begins the process of dissociation from his previous indoctrination.

\*  
\* \* \*

This dissertation stops at this point for the final phase of Malraucian thought has already spanned another lifetime. It too is intricate and complex, and would require an additional thesis to do it justice. Moreover, this last philosophy practiced and preached by Malraux, is radically different from his previous commitment to violence, even though he would argue this as incorrect. Its goal is perhaps the same - the defiance of the human condition. The means of combat, however, are no longer violent in nature.

The subject of violence in Malraux's early writings and novels is sufficient to sustain interest. Everything written after 1948 belongs to a different Malraux, an older Malraux. We do, however, learn of a whole being when we study the six novels and the four or five early works of the author. We learn of a man's personal pledge to assert himself in the face of all which crushes him, and we gain hope for our own defiance and

struggle. We watch one man do so much for so many, and we learn of brotherhood and faith. There are, of course, many negative things which we observe, but we learn from these too: we learn that the individual's egotistical challenge of destiny is futile, but that his creative defiance is not; we learn that violence can engender more violence, but, occasionally, it removes conditions of oppression. Although violence may not have remained Malraux's answer to death and destiny, its evolution in his thought is most absorbing, and informative, and can serve as a lesson to a world inmeshed in a violent network.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Pol Gaillard, Les critiques de notre temps et Malraux,

p. 55: Brasillach comments in an essay dated 1933:

"L'héroïsme agit sur les personnages de M. Malraux à la manière d'une drogue. Héroïsme sans autre raison que lui-même, héroïsme qui ne sert qu'à l'individu, il se mêle merveilleusement au goût du sang et des supplices, il y a en lui toute une odeur puissante et dangereuse. Les personnages s'enivrent de leur héroïsme et y trouvent une exaltation comparable à la volupté de la chair comblée."

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Marcel Savane, André Malraux: Collection Triptyque, p.18.

<sup>4</sup>Lucien Mugnier-Pollet, "Violence et morale," Violence dans le monde actuel, p.39.

**PART I**

**VIOLENCE AND MALRAUX**

## CHAPTER I

### THE LIFE OF ANDRE MALRAUX: ACTION AND ADVENTURE

- I. Childhood, adolescence, and World War I: André's roots and the world at large mark him as violence-oriented
- II. The young adventurer turned *révolté*: individual action is converted to verbal engagement
- III. Revolutionary commitment: violence against Fascism in Spain justifies the nationalistic right to protect freedom and dignity in France

"This is a portrait of a bold and superbly gifted man, who wrote about art and life with feverish intensity and threw himself recklessly into all the important battles of our time, holding nothing back. He was one of those who lived close to the burning heart of things, and was not afraid. He spoke once of 'my useless and bloody life,' but future historians will see in him a man who illustrated in his own person the violence, the dreams, the torments, and the mobility of our tragic age."(1)

André Malraux was born and raised in a milieu and an era which changed violently and rapidly from "la belle époque" to a period of economic, political, social and metaphysical devastation. He witnessed France at peace become France ravaged by war; confidence in the grandeur of France was replaced by the horror of the battlefields of Verdun, and the countless numbers of young men who spilled their blood for "la patrie." Malraux matured during the aftermath of the Great War, when, as other young, lucid individuals, he realized that France's glorious past was officially dead, and it would be the task of his generation to forge a new future, born of the rupture with that past. However, new, radically different values would be needed to sustain combat with the absurd condition which man inherited as his legacy from the war. Unfortunately, Malraux and other young intellectuals experienced a certain "mal du siècle," which afforded them the opportunity to express in words their deception with the universe, but did not render them capable of coping with the abrupt and violent break with a span of fortunate times. Malraux's metaphysical anguish led him quite early to attempt, as an individual, resolution of his and of the world's problems through intense action - one response to the abyss created by the collapse of conventional values, and the scar of four years of endless human sacrifice.

André Malraux was born November 3, 1901, in Paris, the only son of Fernand Malraux and Berthe Lamy. Three years later, the couple separated, and eventually divorced. Almost

immediately then, Malraux was "divorced" from a normal childhood, deprived of a possible stabilizing influence.<sup>(2)</sup> The Malrauxs were from Dunkerque, and André's ancestors were sailors. They were a people with a flair for adventure, and Malraux was to inherit their call to fervent action. It was not uncommon for them to participate in unusual carnivals held for all occasions, including funerals. Young André became acquainted with the bizarre, fantastic masks and costumes, the wild colors, and the night time carnival flames which were to haunt him forever, and which were to translate themselves into the works of literature of the author, expressing his almost demoniacal need of release through intense activity.

His grandfather was a shipowner, a barrel maker, and a great individualist. This strong, masculine figure is recalled in the Antimémoires firstly, because of his non-conformity: outraged against the church, he would conduct his own services outside, even in the rain; secondly, for his invitations to all "undesirable" groups refused refuge by the town such as the Jewish congregation and the circus; thirdly, because of his "Viking" death: "[...] Il tenait à maintenir les rites de sa jeunesse et s'était ouvert le crâne d'un coup de hache à deux tranchants en achevant symboliquement, selon la tradition, la figure de proue de son dernier bateau." (A: 19) This "memorable" action occurred when André was but eight. André's grandfather was the dominating male figure of his youth; his daring, outlandish behavior culminating in suicide, was to leave a strong impression

on the younger Malraux who was taking shape, and was to afford him repeated reference material for his novels: e.g. - Claude Vannec's grandfather, La Voie Royale.

Malraux's father Fernand was a handsome man, lively, vigorous and committed to action. Was he an inventor of odd or comical items or was he a representative to an American bank in France? The facts are unclear. Clara Malraux, however, attests to the man's charm and vitality. He was a tank officer in World War I, soon after which, lacking excitement and adventure, he too closed the book on his life with his suicide. André was much older at this moment, but his heritage was clearly traced. If intense activity were omitted from the course of human existence, this existence would be totally void of meaning, and there would be no point in continuing.

André spent his youth, however, with his grandmother Adrienne, his mother, and his aunt Marie. They lived in a distant and greyish suburb of Paris: Bondy. To add to the area's "natural charm," most of André's childhood was spent within twenty yards of an ancient execution ground for captured bandits who were tortured in Bondy. Other than this exciting detail, however, life with the women was boring and unappealing in comparison with the colorful relations of the Malraux past.

At age five, Malraux was registered as a student in a private institute in Bondy where the level of learning was rather limited. Here, he met a life-long friend, Louis Chevasson. It is said that Malraux hated his childhood, surrounded by women and living rather conservatively. Chevasson denies the poverty

and the unhappiness of Malraux's youth<sup>(3)</sup>; Clara, on the other hand, observes that André's mother often told him he was ugly,<sup>(4)</sup> and the quest for money, beauty, and recognition was most assuredly his way of settling the score with a dull, moneyless past.

André himself was thin and pale. Bernard Halda defines Malraux as a "dionysian" type, having sympathy with regard to life in general, inclined to violence, possessing avid senses, and a marked desire towards self-affirmation or self-realization.<sup>(5)</sup> He excelled early in his studies. André manifested a real passion for books; he was always at the library devouring as much as he could. Books brought the world to him, and his readings exposed him to life as he could never hope to witness it in Bondy. He was not sports oriented, but would walk through the thick wooded areas of Bondy with his companions, and together invent imaginary adventures. Adventure became the necessary escape for the overly sensitive and extremely intelligent André who was not at all satisfied with the hopeless monotony of his world. Then, the war came and the adventures ceased. At night, the thirteen year old could hear the sounds of cannons. Bondy school children were taken to the battlefield by day, André included. The dead were not buried, the bodies were piled up, soaked in gasoline and burned. "The children had just arrived on the battlefield when lunch, consisting of bread, was given to them, and at that moment the wind turned and covered the bread with a light sprinkling of ashes from the white funeral pyres. André remembered the children dropping the bread in terror."<sup>(6)</sup>

It is possible that Malraux's fascination with violence and death began at this crucial time in his life. In actuality, one can assume that his life first began when he came in contact with death, as fascinating and as repelling as it really was.

Fathers at the front, echoes of combat, teachers mobilized, all this created a climate of vacation, excitement, action and adventure for the boys. The deprivations they endured due to rationing only increased the climate of adventure for them, but it resembled "carnavalesque" adventure, surreal and fantastic.

At fourteen, Malraux left his friends at Bondy to go to school at what would become the lycée Turgot at the end of the war. He made friends with what would be a future actor, and a musician, binding him even more closely to adventure, the theater, etc. André found most of his education in music, theater, movies, expositions, and bookstalls along the Seine, displaying definite negative sentiment towards organized instruction.

Malraux tried to register in the lycée Condorcet in 1918. He was not admitted; at this point, he renounced the idea of the "bac." He broke with traditional education, and became a "chineur" - one of a few "highly intelligent young men who made a somewhat precarious living by combing the quays and secondhand bookshops for unrecognized bibliophilic treasures."<sup>(7)</sup> He bought cheaply and sold to dealers such as Simon Kra. His early love of the literary adventure drew him into this selective field of endeavor.

During Malraux's adolescent years, the world was anything but stable. World War I, the Russian Revolution, the fall of the German Empire; these events all occurred between 1914 and 1918. The war, of course, left definite impressions on young Malraux; however, it was some twenty-five years later that he wrote of his father's involvement in the war, the German gas attack on the Vistula Front, and other important incidents which did not seem to affect him while he was a youth. He pushed aside formal education and the war to "make raids" on literature and the arts, to play the stock exchange, to frequent the night spots of Montmartre, carrying a revolver, flirting danger; all in all, leading the life of a young adventurer and a "dandy." At about this time, René Latouche, committed suicide, bringing violent death even closer to young and impressionable Malraux.

At the end of the war, his days as a "chineur" seemed to have paid off. He got charge of the Editions du Sagittaire, a modest undertaking reflecting his literary tastes. Works by Baudelaire and Jarry were prepared and published, and Malraux experienced Baudelaire's "hantise du mal" which soon became his own. This first collection was symbolist in tone, awakening the author to the relationship of his soul to the world around him, particularly that world over which he had little or no control (the world of man and his tragic condition), of which Baudelaire was already aware. He also met art dealer and publisher D. H. Kahnweiler, who introduced André to Cubist painting. Again, Malraux was drawn to its spirit of revolt, and its break with

traditional concepts of art. The Cubist painters substituted a new reality for the old, decadent one which needed revision. Malraux's first "book," Lunes en Papier, was a Cubist inspired fantasy, dedicated to a poet-artist whom Malraux admired greatly - Max Jacob. Malraux's Lunes was, in effect, his first dissension with the past, verbal in form, but violent in content. Malraux commissioned Derain, Galanis, and Jacob to illustrate his second series which was to represent the "classical wing of the avant-garde" movement in painting.<sup>(8)</sup>

Malraux examined literary Cubism in a brief work entitled Des Origines de la Poésie Cubiste, which appeared in the January 1920 short-lived review La Connaissance. He explored the new poetry (as first revealed by Apollinaire), the principles of which Malraux made extensive use in his early writings. The Cubist poet or artist chose to construct a new reality, separated from the surface reality of nature, a reality characterized by the bizarre, the grotesque, the ironic, the mystical. The possible and logical were destroyed; the fanciful and imaginative replaced them. The "carnavalesque" finality of Jacob's works was reminiscent of young André's Flemish ancestry. Malraux later stated his belief that an author should create a coherent world, like all other artists, but one which could "[.] Faire concurrence à la réalité qui lui est imposée, celle de la vie; tantôt en semblant s'y soumettre et tantôt en la transformant pour rivaliser avec elle."<sup>(9)</sup> Already, Malraux anticipated the role of the artist and his combat with destiny. He was also aware of

the needs of the creative man to act to rectify a world which was close to intolerable.

In 1919, the young European lived amidst cars, jazz, the radio, airplanes, the movies, travel, and a League of Nations which promised to provide universal peace, certain of these representing phenomena of which previous generations would not have dared to dream. Living near Paris, Malraux found himself at the core of European intellect and artistry; despite the recent war, a gay café life was the norm. He often joined with poets and artists in discussions of the death of God, the decline of the West, the instability of the world, and other matters of similar magnitude. It is conceivable that the tendency of the author towards pessimism, violence, the grotesque, destruction, and more came out of these exchanges, which began as verbal dissidence.

Clara Goldschmidt and André Malraux met when both were nineteen, maturing in a world of "isms:" dadaism, surrealism, bolshevism, etc. She was of German-Jewish origin; her family was rich, but it had not escaped the strong anti-Semitism of Magdeburg. Clara grew in a relatively liberal atmosphere. She was extremely intelligent. She was collaborating on a review when she met André at a dinner in a restaurant. After the dinner, Clara and a girlfriend accompanied Malraux and the poet Ivan Goll to a night club called "le Caveau Révolutionnaire." Several days later, Clara and André met again, and spoke of poets, of Dostoievski, of Nietzsche, of Spain, of Italy, and more. She told him she was returning to Italy to see "her" painters; he

replied that he would accompany her. The two became fast allies. He took her to museums and galleries; she led him to the races, for both had a penchant for the game. She sensed that he would become a great adventurer or a great writer or both.

An experience which placed them in an "aventure-à-deux" occurred one evening when they exited from a dance hall. André defended Clara and was wounded slightly. The scene was melodramatic, but "nous avons éprouvé le danger, le courage ensemble, la communion devant les autres..." says Clara in volume one of Le Bruit de nos Pas.<sup>(10)</sup> André was experiencing some of the action and violence of which he had heretofore only read.

After this event which made of Clara and André more than platonic acquaintances, Malraux went to his father to ask permission to marry Clara; he was denied permission, perhaps because Clara was German or because André himself was too young. At this point, when Clara boarded her train for Italy, André joined her in her compartment, and made the trip with her. André's action of open rebellion is the first of many decisions the young "révolté" made, and for which he took full responsibility. They were going to attempt a six month marriage and then divorce, (which they did not do until some twenty-five years later), since neither felt the need of the marital bond, but would stay married to avoid scandal for their families. They traveled to Florence and Venice; Clara was awed by André's intense energy. She could only assume that he was making up for lost time, time expended in a sad, boring, rather empty grey Bondy childhood, lacking in genuine emotion, and physical and

intellectual stimulation. Clara called his love a conversion: a break with his former ties with the world, and an introduction to a life shared absolutely and unconditionally.

The two returned penniless to Paris. Clara was beginning to know and understand her new husband-companion well. "I suspected that he was possessed by the desire to stake everything to feel the thrill of the moment more intensely; and I knew the shape of his fear of death."<sup>(11)</sup> Off they were again, to Strasbourg, Prague, Vienna, Magdeburg, Bavaria, Rottenburg, Nuremberg, Greece, Berlin, and back to Paris, in search of the "volonté de puissance" which Malraux did not yet know he wanted to possess, and which he was unable to experience in the West.

André was of induction age, but his feelings for the military were anything but positive. He was sent to Alsace, made a cavalry soldier, stood out because of his height, was totally unhappy, and was finally released from service because of heart trouble brought on by overdoses of caffeine. His "quête de joie" could be satisfied only by individual action, the sole manner to develop an ego which had been suppressed so many years in his matriarchal household.

Since he had not learned a profession or a trade, André continued his work with books - this time, erotic texts which were illustrated in libertine fashion. The texts were often distributed clandestinely. It is evident that André enjoyed the element of risk, and, most likely, he relished the subject matter as well. The erotic relationships manifested in the texts

were evidence of man's desire to dominate and constrain others. In this way, André learned of the power of intense sexual energies to defy the absurd; he later adapted much of what he read to his own literature. Clara and André never avoided the company of objectionable people - addicts, criminals, suspects - or, they could often be found in the company of anyone else who was markedly apart from society.

In addition to the texts, Malraux also played the stock market, investing his money and all of Clara's. At first, their fortune flourished, enabling them to live their lives comfortably traveling, or in any way they chose. However, in the summer of 1923, they learned of their ruin. But, Malraux was already an adventurer, as were to be some of his early heroes - he was free of family obligations, he had no ideological attachments, no clear moral line to follow; he had dabbled in modern literature and art, had traveled, and had speculated on the exchange. He commeced with all types of characters. Despite his lack of formal instruction, he had become an intellectual rebel.

## II

Something had to be done to reestablish the Malrauxs financially. André had always been interested in Asian art - he had read of it, was supposedly a student of Oriental languages (for a while), and his interest in museums and all art work has already been noted. Clara, who had been promised by her father that she would see Angkor, was anxious to make a voyage to Indo-

china. The couple studied up on the Khmer civilization. André, who was still committed to adventure, got authorization from the colonial office for an archaeological expedition to Cambodia. His mission was to relocate the main Khmer road linking the capital at Angkor with the northern province of the empire. He had heard of the temple Banteay-Srei, and was hoping to excavate "objets d'art" for sale in America, to museums or to personal collections. It was in this way that he hoped to gain enough money so that they would not have to worry for a few years. He was convinced that the rule which referred to non-excavation applied only to monuments defined as official ruins. Banteay-Srei had not yet been so defined. However, due to flagrant expropriations of old stones (Cambodian antiquities), the colonial government of Indochina was determined not to allow valuable objects to leave the country. André and Clara set off on this difficult mission which would consist of traveling through a dense forest and suffocating heat. André's boyhood friend, Louis Chevasson, followed the Malrauxs two weeks later.

This adventure almost cost Clara her life - she nearly drowned - before they even reached Saigon. They traveled up the Mekong, arrived at Pnom-Penh, made final preparations, and left for Banteay-Srei. For several days, the three of them, their guide and their "boys" pushed through thickening jungle growth, lived with the unbearable heat and the mosquitos, actively combatting all the forces of a nature hostile to man. After their arrival at the temple, it took them three days to dislodge seven statues weighing several tons.

The authorities had been alerted to the couple's escape, and were not about to allow the Malrauxs to take the booty out of Cambodia. After all of their tribulations, they watched as the crates of the valuable art prizes were seized. Clara and André were arrested but not imprisoned. Pressure was on to imprison André; the authorities wished to make an example of him. Malraux was judged on his past life: his bohemian friends, his literary activities, his marriage into a German-Jewish family, his contributions to avant-garde reviews. He was described unsympathetically by all newspapers in Saigon, and by most newspapers in France. He was called a thief, a liar, and a dangerous source of corruption. Malraux's conviction was due to a second dossier, containing political overtones, accusing him of subversive political agitation. Malraux's own counsel for the defense was unable to see this dossier. André was tried and sentenced to three years' imprisonment; Louis Chevasson was sentenced to one year. They had to relinquish all claims to the sculptures in favor of the government.

It was during this difficult period that Malraux surely matured. The contact which he had with the colonial government disgusted him thoroughly. He learned, for the first time, what decadence, corruption, and greed in powerful places could do. He also began to comprehend the absurdity of the society in which he lived, a society that named a man a criminal because he did not obediently and blindly follow its traditions. While he was a "guest" of the Cambodian government, he watched the

officials amass personal fortunes at the expense of the oppressed natives they governed.

Clara staged a suicide attempt in the hopes of obtaining release to go back to France to seek support for André. Instead of obtaining freedom, she succeeded in placing herself in the hospital. Knowing that to do any good she would have to reach France, she went on a hunger strike. She was finally permitted to leave. On her return voyage by ship, weak, pale and alone, she met a young, sympathetic man, and had a brief affair with him. Later, when she told André of this while under the influence of hashish, his reaction, as she reports it, was that of crying. In her Portrait de Grisélidis, she wrote of a similar occurrence; the reaction of Bella's doctor-lover was a violent one. Apparently, the incident was a scarring one to André. He stated that he would have left Clara, had she not saved his life, and Kyo of Malraux's La Condition Humaine does, in effect, walk out on May purely as revenge for her infidelity.

In any case, she did muster the support necessary to the appeal of the sentence. A petition was signed by many of the leading French literary figures to the effect that a man of Malraux's potential was too great to be punished for an affair that could not even be defined as criminal. Malraux's attorney argued that the temple had never been classified as a monument; it was, therefore, available to anyone who wished to take possession of it. One sympathetic newspaperman in Paris, René-Louis Doyon, of l'Eclair, wrote: "May one pardon a daring that had a certain elegance, an audacity that wears the badge of courage

and lightheartedness?". Malraux himself was so impressed by the entire affair, that reflections of it take up whole tracts of his first two novels, with autobiographical overtones present in the various heroes.

Malraux's sentence was reduced to one year and suspended; Chevasson's, to eight months, and suspended. But, Malraux had seen an oppressive system of which he did not approve; within seven weeks of his return to France, after thanking all those who rallied to his support, after meeting Paul Monin, an outstanding lawyer, newspaperman, and politician from Saigon, he and Clara went back to Indochina to collaborate with Monin on a newspaper which would challenge the reactionary colonial administration of Saigon, and mark Malraux's commitment to a cause which involved more than just personal gain.

"The articles in Indochine and Indochine Enchaînée bridge the gap in style and content between Malraux's light Cubist 'poems in prose' and the passionately committed novels of his mature period."<sup>(12)</sup> Malraux was about to engage himself in the troubles of the tyrannized Annamites, putting aside his own personal demands; his need of intense action broadened to encompass a whole people.

During his obligatory stay in Indochina, while Clara was procuring aid for him, Malraux observed a class system which he found disheartening. His very existence had always depended upon his freedom to act - freedom from traditionalism, freedom to travel, freedom even to make his own mistakes. The servitude he witnessed was appalling. Annamites were thoroughly repressed:

they had neither freedom of speech nor of press. They could not sit at the same restaurants as the white colonial administrators. They grew poorer as their rulers grew richer on enormous profits from land purchase. Malraux headed the Young Annam Party for a while - an illegal, semi-secret nationalist program to restore rights to the Annamites. He and Monin also published a newspaper, Indochine, which first appeared in June of 1925. Their newspaper became the most outspoken advocate of reform in Indochina. The newspaper exposed the corruption of the colonial government in its attempt to encourage the master-servant relationship between the European and the Annamite, to insure the financial successes of the European. Malraux began his action campaign with verbal "engagement." He was no longer simply voicing metaphysical consternation; he was attacking a decadent system of government which perpetuated the humiliation of the masses, and he was offering plans of reform.

The leading conservative paper, Impartial, and Indochine, and their respective editors, were involved in a hate campaign. Impartial's Chavigny hated Malraux for his efforts to reform a system which was putting a fortune into Chavigny's pockets. Malraux caustically and violently attacked Chavigny exposing him, in a series of four editorials, for what he was: a philanderer, debaucher, police informer, provocateur, draft dodger, etc. Malraux did not stop at Chavigny; he also attacked Governor Cognacq and his entire deplorable regime characterized by oppression, land swindle, etc. Malraux was developing his ideas on the "bourreau-victime" aspect of society. Chavigny was clearly a

member of the former; the Annamites represented the latter, the majority of people.

Malraux's humanism germinated during the months to follow. In his paper, he advocated Franco-Annamite reconciliation, freedom of the press, freedom to travel and other personal freedoms, the extension of educational facilities, French citizenship for the Annamites, and more Annamite involvement in their own government.

At this time throughout China, strikes were occurring in protest against English rule. In June of 1925, leaders of the Kuomintang, Chinese Communist Party, organized Chinese crews on British vessels to walk off their jobs. Many Chinese were killed; many of the British evacuated their families from Hong Kong. (Malraux was to use the historic events of China as home soil for his first and third novels.) Meanwhile, this upheaval influenced affairs in Indochina. Malraux reported as accurately as he could events happening in China; Chavigny accused him and his newspaper of representing the Kuomintang, and being responsible for political agitation. Naturally, Malraux would lean more favorably towards the Chinese who were the victims of the British: they were oppressed, humbled, and without liberty. Chavigny did not stop there, however; Paul Monin was almost assassinated by one of Chavigny's men. Then Chavigny and Cognacq threatened the typographers of Indochine with bankruptcy and/or death. Indochine was forced to close in August, only two months after its first appearance.

This setback did not deter Malraux. Firstly, there were a few Annamite sympathizers who would not allow themselves to be frightened by Chavigny's tactics; they supplied Malraux with as much type as they could. Secondly, Malraux went to Hong Kong to purchase new type; on his return trip, he possibly visited and spoke with Borodin, the organizer of the Canton strike. Unfortunately, upon his return, the type he brought was impounded. Finally, however, a second set of type made it through. The paper reappeared again in November of 1925, under a new title, Indochine Enchaînée. The articles appearing in it were more scathing than ever. Their major goal was the ousting of Governor Cognacq from power and influence.

In one such article, "Eloge de la torture," which is quoted in length in the appendix,<sup>(13)</sup> and which was inspired by two major incidents, Malraux shows to just what extent Governor Cognacq went to insure the security of his regime. One case was the Bardez case: the murder of a government official by a wave of human emotion. The Annamites of one village, who had been overburdened with taxes, were informed that their taxes were to be increased. As they gathered in protest, shots were fired by Bardez' men into the gathering. The people simply turned on Bardez and killed him brutally. Most of those who took part in the gathering were rounded up, tortured, and killed. A stinging note was added by Malraux in his paper in reference to the episode: "Tout accusé aura la tête tranchée. 2. Il sera ensuite défendu par un avocat. 3. L'avocat aura la tête tranchée. 4. Et ainsi de suite..."<sup>(14)</sup> In another incident, another Anna-

mite who had been viciously tortured, was examined by a group of doctors who concurred that torture had taken place. The defense attorney of the Annamite was almost poisoned; the defense stenographer was threatened with a job loss. The "torturer," a police official, was rewarded by promotion to a higher position. Malraux learned much of the role of the executioner during his stay in Indochina.

"There doesn't exist a Cambodian who doesn't have his body covered with scars...Thus, the Cambodian is a striped creature of the zebra family."<sup>(15)</sup> Malraux was no longer reading of violence; he was living it.

Malraux's bitterness was not enough to keep the paper going. The repressive measures finally took their toll on this second edition, and Malraux's last editorial in December 1925 urged the people of France to help the Annamites in their fight for freedom. Malraux left for France, at this time, ill and worn out. The Annamites were forced to turn towards Communism as life in Indochina became more and more intolerable. Mercenaries were hired by the "colons" and given "carte blanche" in dealing with the natives. Hatred and violence ruled the country; thousands were executed, mutilated, and butchered without trial. When Andrée Viollis wrote Indochine S. O. S., her highly incriminating indictment of the colonial administration, in 1935, Malraux prefaced it, and spoke again, after ten years of silence, on an issue which had been a passionate one to him. He was aware of the deteriorated situation of the country, and could only lament

the terrorism, rape, thievery, executions, etc. which plagued the nation. Malraux's first direct involvement in intense action had ended bitterly in defeat, but he did not despair, for there were other cultures which needed rectification. Henceforth, his commitment would not be limited to words on paper; he would join in combat alongside the "victimes."

Courage and commitment now being part of Malraux's character, he no longer sought adventure for the sake of adventure. In Indochina he had learned that man could only achieve meaningful action for himself by binding his fate to that of others, by assisting others in achieving the dignity due them. What to do with that burning fever for activity inside him? Included in the options available to him upon his return to France in 1926 were: joining the Surrealist movement, (movement he was hostile to because of a personality conflict with André Breton, and because he would not allow the rules and regulations of an organized revolt to become his own), and joining forces with the Grasset publishing house. He chose the latter. He turned his Oriental battle into a literary one - his Tentation de l'Occident published by Grasset in 1926, contained milder passages on East-West relations than Malraux was accustomed to writing in his previous newspaper commentaries. The years 1926 and 1927 saw several Malraux articles commending Oriental collective harmony, rejecting Western individualism, hinting at the anguish caused by man's absurd condition (the knowledge that he will die and he can do nothing to prevent this), and pointing out the necessity of violent action as antidote of the absurd.

Jean Prévost wrote of Malraux, recently returned from his Indochina adventure: "la plume à la main, il écorchait la vie[.]. Son génie a pu l'assouvir. Plus que l'âge, l'action l'a fait homme. Le danger lui a musclé le coeur."<sup>(16)</sup> He spent much of his time discoursing brilliantly at conferences held in the home of Daniel Halévy, a former Nietzschean biographer, and elsewhere.

In 1928, he became a regular employee of Gaston Gallimard. Malraux returned to a former passion of his, the production of "éditions de luxe." Gallimard was impressed and called upon Malraux to direct the art division of his publishing house. If Malraux's internal conflict demanded violent action as a means of relieving his anguish, it simultaneously required the appeasement brought on by his contact with Eastern forms of art, or any art medium in general. The year 1928 also marked the publication date of his first novel, Les Conquérants, based on his second Indochina adventure. The same year also saw the appearance of two additional "farfelu" texts, in the same vein as Lunes en Papier. The novel was regarded as an event of great importance to contemporary moral history; Malraux's Royaume farfelu was the "Swan song" of his "farfelu" works. In the meantime, he continued his work as art director, setting up exhibitions, and creating literary works of art.

In 1930, Malraux learned of his father's suicide. This was the second suicide to personally touch Malraux, although there were others of which he knew. His father and his grandfather made a point of living life to the fullest degree; when

intense activity ceased for them, so did their very existence. Malraux was at a stage in his own life where his commitment to action seemed at a standstill. Perhaps his own reinvolvement in significant action was partially inspired by the fate of these two men who showed Malraux that he was not yet ready to succumb to destiny. The recurrent suicide pattern in his family and among many of his friends was to haunt Malraux more and more.

After being home in France for about three years, Clara and André, overcome by wanderlust, and by André's more and more compelling need to rid himself of his "malaise," left again for the Orient. This time, their voyage took them to Russia, Persia, and India. They returned a second time in 1930, and a third time in 1931, this last trip continuing for nearly a year. André was on a mission for the Gallimard establishment; he was to bring back works of art which were to link the Greek and Chinese civilizations.

Malraux was being fêted for his new novel. He was thirty; brilliant, agile, a great orator, well traveled, and elegant. In 1933, his only daughter, Florence, was born. During this year, he presented his exposition, worked on the Tableau de la littérature française (begun a few years before), with André Gide, attended dinners and meetings, and wrote the novel which was to earn him the Prix Goncourt: La Condition Humaine. His thoughts and ideas were being shaped by Pascal, Nietzsche, Dostoievski, and to an extent, Marx. His heroes would no longer go down in defeat before the absurd because they would share

fraternal love which Malraux himself would feel the need to seek within a very short time. At the height of his triumph, Malraux learned of the death of his mother. Again, the mask of his true reaction was quickly put in place; and yet, we have one glimpse of the beauty of maternal love in the portrait of Anna, in Le Temps du Mépris. At thirty-three years of age then, Malraux was a "déraciné," still in ardent search of a means to defy death and challenge the absurd and tragic condition of man, who witnesses the demise of his loved ones, and is incapable of any counter-action.

In 1934, Malraux, the pilot Corniglion-Molinier, and the mechanic Maillard, set out to discover the lost city of the Queen of Sheba - adventure which represented a good deal of risk, since it meant flying above areas of barbarous, nomadic tribes and unexplored desert lands. Why, at the peak of all his success, did he embark on such a voyage? The "demon of action" had a strong hold on him at this point. What better way to escape from the pain of personal tragedy (the death of his parents, the termination of his marriage), than by plunging into intense action? 1934 already presaged the beginning of the "temps de troubles" which would disrupt normal life in Europe for well over a decade; Malraux, therefore, wanted to grant himself a final diversion before the long combat which he sensed would follow, and in which he would be a highly active participant. Malraux was also inspired by the Arabian travelers who preceded him: T. E. Lawrence, Rimbaud, and Flaubert's text La Tentation de Saint-Antoine.

Malraux and his companions, dressed à la Lawrence, flew against the wind for some five hours until it became necessary to decide whether they would turn back mission unaccomplished, or take risks and continue on. Just at that moment, spread out below them, was what they claimed to be the lost city. They could not stay long, for the natives were firing upon them from the ground. They were sure, however, that they had encountered the biblical city of the Queen and her people who worshipped the sun. Emperor Haile Selassie entertained the "discoverers," for he was certain that the city of his ancestor did exist; he was glad that they had located it.

On their return voyage, the explorers got caught in a violent storm. The plane lost altitude very rapidly. They were in the eye of the tempest; the plane could have crashed at any instant. When the altimeter registered four hundred meters, they broke through the cyclone, and miraculously, the plane righted itself above a plain. Hills and a lake could be seen in the distance. They were alive. No man could better comprehend the true significance of life, and the urgent need to engage one's life in some vital way. This was the last of Malraux's "actes gratuits." From this incident, Malraux learned that man's life was far too important to be risked for the sake of pure adventure. He devoted the next eleven years to engaging in violent activity for the revision of the human condition in general.

## III

During the early 1930's, Malraux's philosophic viewpoint was molded by a former sociology professor from the University of Berlin, Bernard Groethuysen. He was responsible for pointing writers such as Gide and Malraux in the direction of Marxist-Communism. His faith in man, his sense of the universal, his cultural knowledge, his Russian background, all of these influenced Malraux in selecting his new locales of "engagement."

The time was ripening for the "révolté" to become a true "révolutionnaire." In 1933, the Nazis ruled Berlin. The nightmarish horrors of Malraux's "farfelu" works, and the individual pains faced by the first Malraucian heroes, were being transposed into widespread waves of daily terror, particularly in Germany, Poland, etc. The Nazi Fascist regime, in its deprivation of human rights and its humiliation of the German people (particularly the literary intelligentsia), moved young European artists and writers to show their discontent. At a meeting of the "Association des écrivains et des artistes révolutionnaires," Malraux was quoted as saying: "A la menace, répondons par la menace, et sachons nous tourner vers Moscou, vers l'Armée rouge!"<sup>(17)</sup> He was disgusted with the bourgeois government of the France to which he had returned in 1926, a government which seemed to be a willing accomplice of Hitler; he turned more and more to Communism (although he never joined the Party), because he saw that this was the way to gain the most liberty, dignity, and rights

for the most people, and it involved the revolutionary overthrow of corrupt and stagnant administrations. He became an ally of the militant leftists opposing colonialism, a subject which opened old wounds, and a strong opponent of Fascism.

During the summer of 1934, Malraux attended a conference of writers in Moscow. In a bold speech, he more or less outlined the one major reason which was to keep him from being a Communist, even though sympathetic to the cause: the fact that as a writer, he needed freedom to create; that it would be unthinkable for an artist of any medium to submit to party policies concerning restrictions or limitations on thought. He and Gide were then engaged in the defense campaign of Dimitrov, secretary of the Third International; Malraux was torn between the warm, fraternal feelings gathered on this trip, and the knowledge of the police state that actually was Russia under Stalin. Thanks to the aid of Malraux and others, Dimitrov was acquitted, but remained a prisoner. Gide and Malraux traveled to Berlin and eventually helped to secure Dimitrov's release. It was at this time that Malraux began to suspect complicity between Hitler and Stalin. The Moscow trials, the "barter" of agent flesh, reinforced Malraux's weakening opinion of Communism.

In 1935, Malraux wrote Le Temps du Mépris, which pointed up the Nazi horrors, the terror behind the Hitlerian regime, the repression, imprisonment, and murder of the politically and socially "unfit." It is in the preface of this book that Malraux chooses fraternal combat. Virile battle and artistic achievement complement each other: the latter makes man the creative,

inventive individual that he is; the former binds man to man, making his individual creative acts or deeds count. It is interesting also that in this novel a child appears. Children have always signified hope for the future; André and Clara had recently had one of their own.

In June of 1935, another conference of writers was held. The theme of the conference was the "defense of culture against fascism." From conference to combat - within the year, Malraux was to find himself fighting Fascism on the soil of a neighboring land - Spain.

"En combattant avec les républicains et les communistes espagnols, nous défendions des valeurs que nous tenions (que je tiens) pour universelles."<sup>(18)</sup> Malraux, seeker of adventure, had metamorphosed into Malraux, champion of human rights. Malraux's first Indochina adventure had been basically an "ego" trip - a way for the young man to prove his independence and his "machismo" to himself and to his bride; his second adventure had him battling for an oppressed people by means of his biting newspaper criticism. His search for the lost city of Sheba was pure escapism; we do, however, understand the reasons for this. Now, in the mid thirties, readied by his live contact with diverse philosophies, sickened by the conditions of a corrupt and heinous world, Malraux was about to engage in active and violent physical combat alongside his fellow men, in this case, his "confrères" in Spain, who were being repressed by a Fascist government.

What was Spain like in the summer of 1936? The Republican government was being threatened with overthrow by generals of the Spanish army, (who wished to establish a military rule in Spain), in a coup which was to place one of them, General Francisco Franco, at the head of the government as a Fascist dictator. St.-Exupéry was there: "Ici on fusille comme on déboise."<sup>(19)</sup> Bernanos was indignant because the priests were blessing the executions of the poor. George Orwell joined the ranks of the "Parti ouvrier d'unification marxiste;"<sup>(20)</sup> Hemingway, Dos Passos and Ehrenbourg were there to help save Spain. The Spanish people were going under; they were crushed by the coalition of the Axis powers, the Moorish battalions, the Salazar regime, the Spanish church and the "haute bourgeoisie," the complicity of France and of Churchill's England, which was more preoccupied by the dangers that a red victory could create (in terms of the exploitation of Spanish mines) than by the mortal risks of the rise of Fascism.

The Spanish Civil War was the "curtain raiser" for World War II. Franco was aided by two other European Fascist states: that of Hitler and that of Mussolini. Malraux went to Spain almost immediately after the coup began, primarily as an investigator. He remained to help the republicans, anarchists, socialists and communists restore control, by purchasing planes, hiring pilots, and establishing his own Spanish Squadron, which bombed roads carrying Fascist men and arms. Malraux himself flew several bombing missions, piloted the planes (although he had no pilot's license), and served as machine gunner. Most of the Squa-

dron's aircraft were lost; many of the men were killed or wounded. Malraux had flown a total of sixty-five missions, and was wounded twice. His Squadron fell apart because of lack of funds, equipment and good men. (Many of the men were mercenaries.) No one can accuse the author of not participating directly in this active and violent combat.

In 1937, he put his oratory skills to good use. He came to America as a propagandist for the cause of Republican Spain; he hoped to raise money to buy ambulances and medical supplies. He became head of the Alliance of Anti-Fascist Intellectuals. He traveled across America with his new female companion, Josette Clotis, a young, beautiful woman with whom he had collaborated in the late 1920's while writing articles for the review Marianne, a Gallimard publication. Clara would not give André a divorce; he and Josette lived as man and wife anyway. He returned to Spain after his fund raising speeches, and began filming "Sierra de Teruel" in Barcelona, a film based on his real experiences in Spain, and some of the scenes from his novel, L'Espoir. The film was completed in France in 1939; Malraux and company had to make a quick exit from Spain, since the Fascists who were winning neither appreciated Malraux nor his film. It was a stroke of good luck which saved the film from destruction; at the end of World War II it was finally presented, and earned its creator the Prix Delluc. Malraux's active participation in the Spanish Civil War transformed him from a free agent into a leader guiding his men in an organized endeavor to overthrow the forces

of humiliation and oppression of the Spanish people. He fought for the dignity and the liberty of the "victimes," because in this life, man must make every attempt to boldly and meaningfully challenge the absurd. Malraux's defiance manifested itself as virile fraternity in Revolution, independent of the Communist way, for Malraux had been greatly deceived by its lack of international motivation, assistance and interest.

It was not that Malraux abandoned his friends in Spain; it was simply that the war he had sensed rumbling in the distance had reached home soil. The Russo-German pact that Malraux foresaw had occurred: additional reason for Malraux's break with Communist sympathies, additional reason for him to feel concerned about France. The Malraux who had to experience violence and adventure away from home was to be no less committed to saving his own land from the all-encompassing Fascist tentacles.

Without a respite from his previous "engagement," Malraux entered the French tank corps in 1939. One experience that he had was recorded in his final novel, Les Noyers de l'Altenburg. When he and his tank crew managed to escape certain death, Malraux had the privilege of a second resurrection. In June of 1940, Malraux was wounded, captured, and interned in a camp seventy miles southeast of Paris, at Sens. In November of the same year, he escaped to the south of France, where he went back to writing for a while. He wrote of T. E. Lawrence, a literary figure who had haunted him for nearly twenty years; he also began La Lutte avec l'Ange, a work which was never completed, and parts of which the Nazis supposedly destroyed.

Malraux kept himself out of action for the rest of 1940, and until 1942. He was, of course, disturbed by world events, Hitler's invasion of Yugoslavia, Greece and Russia, Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, etc., but he had lost confidence in many of the French people. Certainly the Vichy government and its compromising Pétain did not inspire him. He also refused to enter combat because he was offered leadership without money or arms. During this time, Josette bore him his first son. The couple settled into a kind of "Disneyland castle"<sup>(21)</sup> which they rented in the Périgord region of France. Here, Malraux continued his writing. In 1943, his second son was born; Clara still refused him a divorce. André would not ask for one because it did not seem an opportune moment for him to separate officially his fate from that of a woman whose German-Jewish origins rendered her very vulnerable.

In the spring of 1944, Malraux rejoined active combat as commander of a group of resistance fighters. As disillusioned as he was with combat, after witnessing its terrible ramifications in the Spanish Civil War and during the beginning of World War II, he still had to enter the battle again. This time, the absurd was at play in his own country. He could not withdraw from the fight for liberty and human dignity at home, when he had been so willing to challenge oppression and humiliation abroad. Nationalism became his new revolutionary violence. He took the name of Colonel Berger, character from his latest novel, but also symbolic of Berger de Reichbach, name of an old Alsatian family

which, in 1870, opted for France, without hesitation, despite all drawbacks. Malraux unified resistance fighters in southwest France. Then, came a series of personal tragedies which would easily have broken many men: André's half-brother, Roland, eleven years younger than André, who was engaged in a conspiratorial group and had been captured, was lost on a ship torpedoed just a few days before the end of the war. His other half-brother Claude, twenty years younger than André, who was involved in blowing up German ships around Le Havre, was also captured by the Gestapo and executed. Josette was a victim of a freak accident the same year; she tripped coming off a train, was run over, and killed. Malraux himself was captured in July after being wounded in both legs. He faced a firing squad, which turned out to be a charade. He awaited torture - the worst thing about it being the unknown. In his Antimémoires, Malraux has said: "J'avais plusieurs fois frôlé la mort violente." (A: 222) There was no torture; however, there was an "interrogation:" "A droite et à gauche, des portes ouvertes sur deux hommes attachés les mains aux pieds, et que l'on martelait à coup de bottes et d'une sorte de matraque que je ne distinguais pas." (A: 251) Did Malraux have first hand knowledge of man's brutality to man? As he awaited his turn, another miracle was occurring; the Gestapo had Roland's files instead of André's! Roland's dossier was being read, and once again, André was to be spared.

He was transferred to a prison in Toulouse; the Germans were at the point of retreating, and the French people came to

liberate the prisoners. Malraux then went north and formed the Alsace-Lorraine brigade in September of 1944; the war ended there in February of 1945. With the end of the war, came the death of Malraux's "demon of action." In just twenty years, Malraux had seen more violent action in more ways than most people ever see or would want to see in a lifetime.

What had Malraux known in World War II which had finally turned him away from violence? In a speech dedicated to Jean Moulin, Head of the Resistance, who died a martyr without revealing secrets to the Gestapo, Malraux wrote: "Bafoué, sauvagement frappé, la tête en sang, les organes éclatés, il atteint les limites de la souffrance humaine sans jamais trahir un seul secret, lui qui les savait tous." (A: 593)

On the torture he witnessed in World War II, he wrote:

Il y a vingt ans que je pense aux camps. L'horreur et la torture ont passé dans presque tous mes livres, en un temps où l'on ne connaissait encore que le bain. Mon expérience est presque sans valeur, bien que je n'aie pas oublié le petit gestapiste frisé, ni les torturés de Toulouse à travers les portes ouvertes, ni la femme à la cuiller de thé. Et il ne s'agit pas d'expérience, mais de seul dialogue plus profond que celui de l'homme et de la mort. (A: 600)

Of the S. S. he wrote:

La S. S. chef du camp passe sur son vélo le long d'une colonne de détenues qui se rendent au travail. Elle descend et va gifler une prisonnière, mal alignée, peut-être. Celle-ci, chef de réseau et consciente de ce qu'elle va faire, la gifle à toute volée. Halètement de toute la colonne. Coups de cravaches frénétiques des S. S. hommes

et femmes. On lâche les chiens sur la prisonnière, mais son sang coule sur ses pieds, et les chiens, au lieu de mordre, le lèchent, comme dans les légendes chrétiennes. Moins sentimentaux, les S. S. chassent les chiens et frappent jusqu'à la mort. Sur le visage des détenues au garde-à-vous, les larmes coulent en silence. (A: 612)

When has a man had enough? "L'enfer n'est pas l'horreur; l'enfer c'est d'être avili jusqu'à la mort, soit que la mort vienne ou qu'elle passe: l'affreuse abjection de la victime, la mystérieuse abjection du bourreau. Satan, c'est le Dégradant." (A: 613) When the irremediable is preceded by torture - physical or mental in origin - man's humiliation is complete, and the absurd fully conquers man. Malraux had seen enough of war to know that it could only propagate further pain and additional torture, which in turn would play into the hands of the absurd. After Malraux's contact with suffering beyond belief, with the knowledge that man would always be capable and willing to deliberately harm those with whom he shares the earth, how could Malraux hope any longer that the violence he once knew joined men together in fraternal combat to free them from the yoke of oppression, would ever do more than replace one form of oppression with another? He used violence as a tool one last time to help free France from its yoke of oppression; once the dignity and the liberty of the French were secured, Malraux rejected forever a concept in which he had believed and which he had revered for a quarter of a century. Les Noyers de l'Altenburg, his last action novel, illustrates the conclusion Malraux took twenty-

five years to establish: in actuality, violence begets the total destruction of man, rē the gas attack on the Vistula Front; violence is futile, and responsible for cultural annihilation. Through art and creation alone, can man be fundamental, and successful in perpetuating a permanent, enduring attack against the absurd.

At the end of World War II, Malraux joined in a political union with Charles de Gaulle, leader of the French Resistance movement during the war. There was much criticism of Malraux at this point. Since this dissertation covers a literary career ending with World War II, there will be no judgments made on this part of the life of the author. All one can say is that Malraux placed France, its integrity and prosperity, above all else. National regeneration was to reestablish social order in France, and promote dignity and brotherhood. Nationalism was to be, in a sense, Malraux's new humanism, a non-violent evolution.

Charles de Gaulle seemed equal to his myth; when he asked Malraux if he wished to help him, Malraux did so in the name of assisting France. In June of 1945, Malraux was appointed technical counselor to de Gaulle's provisional government. In 1946, when de Gaulle stepped down, so did Malraux. Malraux became the animator of the Rassemblement du Peuple Français, a movement aimed at getting de Gaulle to come back to power. Malraux believed in de Gaulle and in France; he now believed that the best place to actively live out one's destiny was in one's own country. He felt that Gaullism was the new energy necessary to put France on the road to recovery.

By 1953, the R. P. F. dissolved itself; Malraux could only visualize France as dying. Malraux had looked upon Gaullism as "a movement of public salvation,"<sup>(22)</sup> one which would serve liberty and be democratic. That is why when in 1958 de Gaulle became Head of State, Malraux became his cultural minister; his life-long devotion to art took on national tones. His "maisons de la culture" replaced his virile combat. In 1959, with the birth of the Fifth French Republic, France was reborn. Malraux defended the new constitution, the Republic, and its President, Charles de Gaulle.

Malraux was often attacked for his silence during the years of the Algerian crisis, and for his seemingly reversed stand on torture:

Faut-il croire qu'il ne peut faire oeuvre vraiment créatrice, que sous l'aiguillon de l'action dangereuse ou frénétique? Faut-il penser que le poète épique en lui, ne s'éveille qu'à l'ombre et au bruit des épées? Que l'aise le condamne à l'essai, la paix au commentaire, et que faute de risquer, d'être défié et talonné, il n'est bon qu'à crayonner superbement en marge de l'oeuvre d'un autre? Curieux cas de créativité dans la contrainte. (23)

In 1962, Malraux did condemn the torture and censorship prevalent in Algeria. He had been silent for two reasons: firstly, he thought that many of the stories he had heard about torture were fabricated; secondly, as part of the new government in which he firmly believed, he wanted to give a vote of confidence to its leader. However, Malraux was not blind: he

discreetly obtained the release of many militant Algerians from murder camps. It is not easy to accept a deliberate avoidance on the part of Malraux to deal with an oppressed people, in this case, the Algerians. It is more that he believed in the fraternization of Algeria - France should remain to help the Algerians help themselves. Is this a contradiction of what he said nearly thirty years earlier? :

[.] Quand les Français construisent en Indochine des routes ou des ponts, qu'on les paye, comme on le fait lorsqu'ils dirigent les travaux de Siam ou de la Perse; et qu'ils dépensent ensuite à leur guise l'argent qu'ils ont gagné. Car si ceux qui travaillent doivent, en plus de leur salaire, recevoir le pouvoir politique, il faut faire en France les soviets, du spécialiste à l'ouvrier. (24)

Did he break with the ideals of his youth? Malraux found both liberty and fraternity in Gaullism, and an intellectual man of action in de Gaulle. De Gaulle would save the nation; Malraux would be at his side. It was good that Malraux had at least such a worthy cause to pursue, for personal tragedies continued to plague him. Perhaps the best and most intensely lived years of his life were startlingly wiped out one day in 1960 when the two sons he had had by Josette were killed in a car accident. In 1962, members of the Algerian terrorist organization, the OAS, bombed Malraux's house; the five year old daughter of the proprietor lost an eye. Although Malraux himself had renounced violence, it was as if violence were not ready to release its hold on Malraux.

In 1969, when de Gaulle stepped down a second time, so did Malraux. With the death of de Gaulle, it would seem that Malraux too would "die" spiritually. However, this has not been the case. In 1970, Malraux prepared to go to Bengla-Desh, to celebrate the nation's becoming a state. In 1972, he visited with former President Nixon to talk with him about stopping the war in Viet Nam. In July of 1973, he was present at the opening at the Fondation Maeght in St. Paul-de-Vence of his collection of artifacts, paintings, and sculptures obtained painstakingly throughout his life. He continues publishing even now.

\* \* \* \* \*

At age seventy-four, Malraux has not renounced action. He has perhaps rechanneled violent action into more peaceful forms of action, such as art, literature and culture in general. Malraux's entire life stands in open defiance of the absurd; it is not likely at this time that Malraux would cease his combat with destiny. It is via man's actions that he may do combat with the absurd condition which is his; he has the capacity to add dignity to his life and to subtract from it all humiliation. Malraux's life bears witness to this credo; he was able to "transformer en conscience une expérience aussi large que possible." (E: 388-9)

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Robert Payne, A Portrait of André Malraux, introduction, p.iii.
- <sup>2</sup>Walter G. Langlois, "The Debut of André Malraux, Editor (Kra 1920-22)," PMLA, LXXX, 1(March 1965), p.111, states:  
 "Little is known of Malraux's life before his Indochina adventure in 1924. Most scholars dismiss his activity during this early period. This lack of interest is partly due to the absence of much concrete information, Malraux being particularly reluctant to discuss what he calls his 'vie privée.'"
- <sup>3</sup>Jean Lacouture, André Malraux: une vie dans le siècle, p.18. Louis Chevasson states and Lacouture cites him:  
 "Quant à la pauvreté où il aurait vécu, c'est une invention. L'épicerie de la rue de la Gare marchait fort bien et notre ami n'a jamais manqué de rien."
- <sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.
- <sup>5</sup>Bernard Halda, Berenson et André Malraux, p.23.
- <sup>6</sup>Payne, op. cit., p.12.
- <sup>7</sup>Langlois, op. cit., p.112.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p.118.
- <sup>9</sup>Gaëton Picon, Malraux par lui-même, p.38.
- <sup>10</sup>Clara Malraux, Apprendre à vivre, p.268.
- <sup>11</sup>Clara Malraux, Memoirs, trans. by Patrick O'Brian, p.193.
- <sup>12</sup>Walter G. Langlois, André Malraux: The Indochina Adventure, preface, p.viii.
- <sup>13</sup>Indochine Enchaînée, November 2, 1925. see appendix a.
- <sup>14</sup>Indochine Enchaînée, November, 1925.
- <sup>15</sup>Langlois, André Malraux, op. cit., p.193.
- <sup>16</sup>Lacouture, op. cit., p.130.

- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p.165.
- <sup>18</sup>Picon, op. cit., p.90.
- <sup>19</sup>Lacouture, op. cit., p.233.
- <sup>20</sup>Loc. cit.
- <sup>21</sup>Lacouture, op. cit., p.281. The castle seemed to coincide with the mood of Malraux at the time; he needed a momentary respite from his commitment to action.
- <sup>22</sup>Janine Mossuz, André Malraux et le Gaullisme, p.134.
- <sup>23</sup>Lacouture, op. cit., p.340.
- <sup>24</sup>André Malraux, préface à Indochine S. O. S., par Andrée Viollis, p.x.

## CHAPTER II

### INFLUENCES: LITERARY, ARTISTIC, PHILOSOPHIC, AND HISTORIC PREFERENCES

- I. Pascal: the origins of metaphysical unrest and man's tragic condition
- II. The "philosophes" and the French Revolution: the violence of Laclos, Sade and Saint-Just
- III. The nineteenth century: the rediscovery of man's tragic condition and his potential for evil: Dostoevski, Nietzsche, Lautréamont, Hoffmann, Goya
- IV. The twentieth century: the permanency of violence engendered by war; the pre- and post-war "ambiance;" the "entre-deux-guerres" period; the Spanish Civil War; World War II, and the reportage of T. E. Lawrence, Hemingway

"Je ne cherche aux livres[.]que la science qui traicte de la connoissance de moy mesmes, et qui m'instruise à bien mourir et à bien vivre."

(Montaigne, "Des Livres.")

A man can often be the product of what he reads and what he observes. Young Malraux had definite artistic and literary likes and dislikes. We must remember the world of Malraux's youth; it has already been stated that the world at this time was shaken by revolutions, in both thought and deed. A new "mal du siècle" had been born. (1) The birth of psychoanalysis, the death of God, the negation of traditions and conventional values, the devastation of war, the ardent desire to replace decadence by new ideals, the broadening horizons of the ever-expanding world, and the philosophical clashes brought on by an East-West confrontation, all of this pointed to a renewed need for adventure, a search for a new form of escapism to appease the metaphysical "malaise" eating away at modern, twentieth century man.

With the death of Christianity, man was obliged to take a look at himself and his world. He found that world foreign, alien, even hostile. Western man was tempted by the Orient: he could find the peace necessary to escape his new anxieties by losing himself in a collective harmony. Many men, like Malraux, turned back to antiquity to re-inspire themselves. In the cradle of humanism which was Greece, man's activity had value; it was by his action that man often escaped destiny's domination, and affirmed his freedom. With the death of Christianity, man held the place allotted to God.

History replaced Christianity; but man's creation, history, then turned on man, showing not only that man was mortal, but so was his civilization. Man began to suspect his identity; after all, how can one assume communication between

civilizations? If man exists, but there is no fundamental man, upon what can we base the concept of man? Perhaps, all through his life, through his readings, his exposure to the arts, and his actions, Malraux was, and is still, looking for the meaning of the human adventure.

## I

At the heart of Malraux (and his works) is Pascal.<sup>(2)</sup>

In an interview in 1945, Malraux said he considered himself part of France's heroic tradition in which Pascal is an essential link, and he believes French literature of the new age will be important because of its "accent pascalien."<sup>(3)</sup> Pascal creates a climate of metaphysical unrest for Malraux. Malraux's obsession with death, his anguish with regard to man's fate, echo Pascal's anxieties and self-interrogation. Pascal was awed by the dual condition of man: his grandeur and his misery. The problem of man's double nature often prevents him from attaining the truth. He paints man as rather bleak and frail without God. He shows man as being unable to understand either nature or himself:

Voilà notre état véritable; c'est ce qui nous rend incapables de savoir certainement et d'ignorer absolument. Nous voguons sur un milieu vaste, toujours incertains et flottants, poussés d'un bout vers l'autre. Quelque terme où nous pensions nous attacher et nous affermir, il branle et nous quitte; et si nous le suivons, il échappe à nos prises, nous glisse et fuit d'une fuite éternelle. Rien ne s'arrête pour nous[.] Nous brûlons de désir de trouver une assiette

ferme, et une dernière base constante  
pour y édifier une tour qui s'élève  
à l'infini, mais tout notre fondement  
craque, et la terre s'ouvre jusqu'aux  
abîmes. (4)

Pascal's dilemma influences each man of every generation. It is man's obligation to know himself, no matter how great the pain or mental suffering. In seeking self-knowledge, man also flees from it, for there are but a few who have the courage to study their limitations, failings, weaknesses, etc. This fear often leads man to escape the conquest of himself, to deceive himself via the senses, his imagination, etc. Many of the weak anti-heroes Malraux creates are extensions of the seventeenth century Pascal characterization full of self-doubt and fear. One such character is incapable of being alone with himself, resists pondering his mortality, his future demise, etc. Pascal's "types" are unwilling to recognize their faults. They must imagine or amuse themselves, for if they are to rest, they will sense the void, become sad and despondent. Man is the only creation to know he will die; he refuses to contemplate death for it makes him unhappy. He prefers existing in a state of ignorance: "To be happy he would have to make himself immortal; but, not being able to do so, it has occurred to him to prevent himself from thinking of death."<sup>(5)</sup> Pascal's consolation was his faith; with the death of God, Malraux was left with Man who could only turn to diversion (violence, eroticism, gambling) to distract himself from contemplating his nothingness. The human condition the men witness in the courtyard as they await

their death, as is fashioned in thought by Pascal, is reflected in the eyes of each one of the victims. It is not unusual for men who undergo torture and humiliation to wish to escape the abyss. That is why the heroes of Malraux's La Condition Humaine are truly tragic heroes: they stand up to the bitter reality of torture and death and defy it without succumbing, to the last moment of their life.

Both Pascal and Malraux face up to death: for both, man overcomes death by his greatness, by his ability to combat destiny. Both men believe in man's search for the best within himself, as illustrated by this quote of Pascal which is echoed by Malraux in Les Noyers de l'Altenburg: "Malgré la vue de toutes nos misères, qui nous touchent, qui nous tiennent à la gorge, nous avons un instinct que nous ne pouvons reprimer, qui nous élève."<sup>(6)</sup> Isn't this what comes out of the colloquia at Altenburg, that man has within himself the capacity to step out of the abyss, to challenge death by his affirmation of life.

## II

If Pascal again began to pose the same questions which had been raised in antiquity, the French philosophers and writers of the eighteenth century took advantage of the liberties they observed in the worlds functioning around them, to continue more and more relevant interrogations of their government and of their way of life. Their probes were somewhat less meta-

physically oriented, and somewhat more oriented towards the possibility of man to implement changes in his wretched, subservient or oppressed conditions. Pascal's resigned men in chains were replaced by a new breed of men unwilling to accept subjugation, and capable of bringing about change, even if it meant a violent break with the past.

These men were responsible for a new atmosphere which seized hold of the people of France, forcing them to the realization of their lack of liberty, the most highly valued of man's possessions. They preached man's natural right to freedom and his equality before the law. Jean-Jacques Rousseau protested the moral and physical repression of the world of letters, and the decadent, antiquated educational system. Upon discovering the mass corruption and social evil about him, a revolution occurred within him; he scorned the maxims and prejudices of his time. He preached action against the despot, action which consists of more than just words. He was persecuted as an infidel and a madman for his ideas on social and civil liberties; however, he is considered a major influence of the French Revolution.

Voltaire also rebelled against authority and the oppressive autocracy of the King, the Church, and the Law. He witnessed and lived injustice, was imprisoned and exiled; Malraux's experiences, particularly those of Indochina, were almost as painful and memorable. Voltaire did not approve the despot's tyrannical rule, but he understood that man's will drove him to power, wealth, and supremacy.

Diderot also developed thoughts on the tyranny of social conventions, and the hypocrisies of the ruling class. Much of his work prophesized the revolutionary torment which was given even greater inspiration by the simultaneous fight for freedom in America.

Towards the end of the Revolutionary period, there were a number of young men that had been molded by events into ruthless, calculating tyrants of another sort. One of them, Saint-Just, became a leading orator of the Revolutionary period. He was so caught up in the violence, that his soul fused with the concept of blood-letting. He urged the death of Louis XVI, for Louis XVI was an oppressor who prevented the people from experiencing liberty and happiness. Saint-Just believed in the Republic, sensing it would change the condition of men. It alone represented revelation and hope. Saint-Just turned from theory to action, joining the Committee of Public Safety, where he could feel the pulse of the Revolution. "Those who make revolution in the world, those who wish to win to better things, must not sleep except in the tomb," is a remark taken from his Oeuvres Complètes. Saint-Just was obsessed with destiny. The Revolution was man's call to death, and at the same time, his only hope to escape it, and the crushing weight of humiliation and oppression. Malraux observed through Saint-Just how one could make one's life count through violent and revolutionary action. Saint-Just was the personification of this action; through the search for glory and/or fortune, he learned that destiny and the abyss could be significantly defied. Malraux learned from this

idealist, loner, dreamer, and reader of the classics - Saint-Just - just how much he had in common with him. Malraux says of Saint-Just: "Il voulait n'être que ses actes, et que ces actes fussent exemplaires." (TN: 129) This is basically a definition of Garine and Perken, the early Malraucian heroes who made life count for themselves through their devotion to violent and intense activity. "Saint-Just et la force des choses" became the third essay in Le Triangle Noir, along with those on Goya and on Laclos.

Another engaging writer in Malraux's eighteenth century collection was this latter, Laclos. Malraux became intrigued by erotic texts. He dealt with Sade's works for a time because he was interested in the relationship of will, domination, and humiliation. "Par leurs deux personnages significatifs, Les Liaisons sont une mythologie de la volonté; et leur mélange permanent de volonté et de sexualité est leur plus puissant moyen d'action." (TN: 47) Laclos' characters do not simply wish to act; they wish to govern their actions. Malraux was interested in the violence of sexuality brought on by constraint. (An excellent illustration of this occurs in the Valérie-Ferral relationship of La Condition Humaine.) Malraux admired the fact that Laclos did not use force to create his erotic climate; he used the art of persuasion. Eroticism occurs when there is sexual restraint; this can lead to violent reactions and a test of human will. In a relationship where eroticism is present, one party tries to dominate the other; one is humiliated and forced to be aware of the pathetic absurd condition which is his or hers:

Volonté et sexualité se mêlent, se multiplient, forment un seul domaine, précisément parce que, Laclos ressentant et exprimant la sexualité avec d'autant plus de violence qu'elle est liée à une contrainte, la volonté ne se sépare pas de la sexualité, devient au contraire, une composante du domaine érotique du livre. (TN: 48)

In this relationship of inequality, the party which dominates is in desperate search of meaning, which can only be experienced by crushing another human being. The victim is actually the source of life to the victor; if the victim experiences "une lente agonie," the victor tastes that much better his will to power. At the least, Laclos' personages do endeavor to dominate their fate, as do Perken and Garine, even if their "motus operandi" is erroneous.

Sade also appealed to Malraux for several reasons. Sade rebelled against the "philosophes" for he realized that reason could not combat destiny. He turned towards the senses and physical acts, or acts of the flesh, instead. Sade held crime and evil to be unique. He was a libertine in the fullest sense of the word, against Christianity, for it oppressed man. He supported the total freedom of man, and denied the existence of God. He investigated man and his tendencies towards murder which man looks upon as both an obligation and a pleasurable experience. With total freedom comes man's cruelty towards man - his sadism is a necessary by-product of his absolute ego and independence. In torturing a victim, the victor wishes to prolong the torture, for it is his way of seeing himself eternized. Man's destructive inclination is incompatible with the existence of God. God disap-

peared, but the devil remained, as evidenced in Malraux's Lunes en Papier. Malraux agrees with much of Sade's philosophy, and is totally aware of man's penchant for evil, and his delirious will of impossible possession, his tragic flaw. He portrays many characters in a position of domination, seeking immortality through their use of power over another. He concludes, however, that such attempts are vain, but he has investigated much of what Sade examined before him.

### III

One of the purposes of violence for Malraux would be to help combat and destroy the evil in man, that which is often responsible for bringing on some of man's acts of irrational violence. One of the writers who was very preoccupied with the problem of evil was Dostoievski. Dostoievski's life had not been an easy one. He was committed to revolutionary action. Dostoievski ran a subversive printing press, as did Malraux. Finally, because of his political activity, he was sentenced to death. While waiting in prison, he was troubled with terrible nightmares, he felt as if he would go mad, and he tried to send code messages by tapping on the wall. He endured endless interrogations. His execution by shooting was to take place some eight months later. (To this point, Malraux's Kassner of Le Temps du Mépris seems to be a recreation of Dostoievski.) He was marched out along with other condemned prisoners, but his execution was a charade. His

life was restored to him, for his sentence had been commuted. (Malraux underwent a similar incident shortly after his second capture in World War II.) Dostoievski worked at hard labor for four years, isolated from society as are all prisoners, as was Malraux. However, during this time, he began to enter into communion with his fellow prisoners. They shared the loneliness of the outcast. He was able to make a judgment about the role of executioners, a thought which Malraux was to echo some eighty years later. The executioner was the "embodiment of human error and degradation. He represented all that was corrupt in the human animal."<sup>(7)</sup> In his The House of the Dead, Part II, chapter iii, Dostoievski defines the executioner as follows:

There are people who are greedy for blood like tigers. Those who have once tasted this unlimited power over the blood, the body and the souls of their fellow men, being brethren according to the law of Christ - those who have tasted this power and have taken possession of the boundless opportunity to humiliate most bitterly another made in the image of God - such men become the servants and not the masters of their insatiable desires.

Tyranny is a habit which is capable of being developed into a disease: I declare that the best of men may grow hardened and degraded to the level of a beast by nothing more than force of habit. Blood and power intoxicate; from them comes the most exquisite brutality and lust. The greatest perversions finally become acceptable and even delightful to the mind and heart. The man and the citizen disappear forever in the tyrant. The return to human dignity, repentance and the resurrection of the spirit become scarcely possible.

Dostoievski's The Idiot is mentioned during the colloquy held at Altenburg in the novel by the same title. Malraux

considered The Idiot as one of three novels which could be read while one was imprisoned, along with Don Quixote and Robinson Crusoe. All three deal with men cut off from their fellow men by more than just physical separation. These solitary figures try to regain mankind - Prince Myshkin, of Dostoievski's work, tries by his saintliness. He is unfit for a society which does not understand him. Any man can be forced to be alone, by idealism, or by shame or by humiliation. Both Malraux and several of his characters were destined to experience solitude, like the idealistic Don Quixote and the saintly Prince.

Other of Dostoievski's works inspired Malraux as well. He was unable to resist the many portraits of great sinners and criminals, and Garine of Les Conquérants is said to be based on Stavrogin of Dostoievski's The Possessed. Stavrogin is a seeker of excitement and action because nothing excites him; Garine has to be where he can experience his will to power. Stavrogin is apart from other men because of an enormous ego which drives him to fill the void which is his life. Dostoievski matured in the same kind of sickening decadence which seemed to influence Malraux so strongly. Both are the authors of works which deal with the tragedy of the lonely man: Dostoievski's characters seem to see hope after a time of suffering and despair; Malraux's characters are less fortunate, for in the end they must be overwhelmed by destiny.

Dostoievski had other characteristics which were to haunt and inspire Malraux. He gambled, he traveled with a lover through Europe while his wife lay dying, he lost many family members who were dear to him. His novels are highly autobiographical. They are filled with tragedy, nihilism, terror and a sense of darkness falling upon the earth. For Dostoievski, the human soul could only succeed when wrestling with the Angel.<sup>(8)</sup>

Malraux assimilated much of Dostoievski's thought. He had another great philosopher-writer inspire or impress him equally: Friedrich Nietzsche. With Nietzsche, tragedy was reborn. We already know how strongly Greek tragedy affected Malraux; now, in addition to the problem of evil confronting man, was added the problem of destiny. The latter was not a new idea to Malraux. All of the writers he had chosen to read exposed man's limits in the face of his fate. The combination of the presence of evil, the absurdity of the human condition, the lack of a God to take responsibility, simply forced Malraux's thoughts along more and more negative lines. Both Nietzsche and Malraux confronted a disintegrating civilization, their own civilization. Their major concern was modern Europe, and in what respects it was wanting. Nietzsche's "Zarathoustra" really seeks deliverance from anguish; nothing more or less than this is sought by the Malraucian heroes. Both men are agnostics who founded their agnosticism on the necessity of promoting man's dignity.

Nietzsche wrote of the death of God and proclaimed the "overman." According to Nietzsche, man must give his life meaning, man must become a creator. "Of all that is written I love only

what a man has written with his blood."<sup>(9)</sup> Man is what he does, says one Malraucian hero. Nietzsche was plagued by a problem that had similarly grievously pained Dostoievski: if man is free to act, let us suppose that he acts to the disadvantage or detriment of another man. What is his responsibility, if any? Malraux had discovered (and was later turned away from violence for the very same reason), that violent acts occur without purpose, often simply as bloody brutalities, for "man is the cruellest animal" plagued by the "lust to rule: the scalding scourge of the hardest among the hardhearted; the hideous torture that is saved up for the cruelest; the dark flame of living pyres."<sup>(10)</sup>

Nietzsche also wrote of tragedy, and learned from it that life could be affirmed as sublime, beautiful and joyous despite all the suffering and cruelty. We often owe to art and music the saving grace of life: "[...]When the danger to his will is greatest, art approaches as a saving sorceress, expert at healing. She alone knows how to turn these nauseous thoughts about the horror or absurdity of existence into notions with which one can live."<sup>(11)</sup> Music has a deep relationship to the true nature of all things. Music is the language of the will, as can best be illustrated in the scene of Nietzsche's temporarily overcoming his madness in the train, as described by Uncle Walter in Les Noyers de l'Altenburg, as experienced by Ramos in L'Espoir, and Kassner in Le Temps du Mépris. Music gives birth to the tragic myth.

Man must live a creative life; he must give himself meaning and live his will to power, to substitute for the faith he once had in God. He is self-commanding, his own judge, avenger and victim. To create, he must first annihilate, and from nothing start afresh. Nietzsche declares three previously cursed items to be positive and not negative traits: sex, the lust to rule, and selfishness. He also states that evil is man's greatest strength. Malraux toys with several of the Nietzschean concepts, agreeing with the necessity of destroying certain of the values and traditions held sacred by previous generations, and opting for a new morality. Nietzsche takes his characters beyond good and evil, demonstrating that a truly strong-willed personage may not suffer the conflict of good and evil, but he will be great, lonely, and different. Nietzsche's flair for the dramatic often made his thinking unclear or apparently contradictory to the reader; however, much of his philosophy of the "overman," man and his action being man's new faith and man's new anguish, were certainly studied by Malraux.

The climate of violence in French literature reflects nineteenth century man's inward contemplation of his fears, his obsessions, and his despondency. It is needless for us to know whether Malraux read one specific work by one specific author; we know that he was an avid reader, and that anything out of the norm appealed to him - the more controversial a text, the more chance that Malraux had read it. "Vous savez qu'il est sur la liste noire?" said Roger Stéphane to Malraux when they met

during World War II, in reference to Montherlant. "C'est le meilleur moyen pour qu'on le lise clandestinement."<sup>(12)</sup> If we go back to Baudelaire, we find that the poet's imagery was anything but void of horror, death, nightmares, eroticism, and destruction. Baudelaire was obsessed with the irremediable, remorse, assassination and more. He saw himself enveloped by evil, and tried to extract beauty from it. He scandalized and shocked his readers, but his inner turmoil was no less grandiose. With evil and wretchedness pervading the Paris of his day, Baudelaire lived in despair. The evil which was omnipresent brought destruction and annihilation; Baudelaire was a loner in revolt against the forces of evil which promised to overwhelm and subjugate man. His verbal outpouring was violent in its imagery, but a reflection of a desperate man witnessing the nightmare of life, and the abyss encircling him. Malraux inherited the same human condition one half century later.

Lautréamont was another young literary revolutionary, disturbed by evil and recurring obsessions. He spent many sleepless adolescent nights, and his "Chants du Maldoror" echo scenes of violence and war. Even the title, an anagram, "aurore du mal,"<sup>(13)</sup> indicates the themes of lycanthropy, vampirism, murder and bestiality to be found within. The work swarms with sea monsters, animals of prey, insects and vermin. The "chants" were composed of five introductory stanzas on violence, hate and evil, with scenes of torture, patricide, incest, rape, debauchery, hanging, obsessions with sexuality, perversions, etc. Lautréamont's "chants" are not unlike Malraux's early writings where the ebullience of

youth portrays all its obsessions, the most striking, being death. Lautréamont, however, was far more destructive and obsessive, "singing" the boredom, anxiety, and melancholy of youth in general. Whereas most young people outgrow the somber thoughts of death, terror, and perversity, Lautréamont's "rêverie" was not given the opportunity to dissipate, and we are left with a picture of a young man suffering horribly the anguish of maturing, and seeing nothing but evil about him. His literary revolt was so violently shocking that he became precursor of the surrealist movement in literature. Both his works and Baudelaire's were examined by young Malraux, editor of the Editions du Sagittaire.

Another of the nineteenth century influences, particularly on the early works of Malraux, was Ernst T. A. Hoffmann, and although he was not French, the atmosphere of dark foreboding present in his weird tales, did impress Malraux. Hoffmann's use of demons, sepulchres, dark veils of clouds, fire, the mention of the dark powers of fate and mysterious destiny, were to be reflected in Malraux's own thoughts. Hoffmann felt there were certain powers of evil within all people which work towards man's ruin. Man was a toy of the mysterious forces of destiny, and when destiny willed it, characters would go mad, or become possessed. Satan and sorcery, murder, poisoning, burning, blood, and beheading are present in many of the tales, none of which seem to be missing from Malraux's own works to appear when the author was in his twenties.

There are also artists who influenced Malraux in his writing, perhaps the most important being Goya. Malraux's art taste

tended towards the fantastic, the rare. An artist was to be a revealer of mysteries, a companion in man's dark journeys into the soul, a prophet.<sup>(14)</sup> Malraux looked into works on Satanism and demonology. He was interested in Odilon Redon, the nineteenth century painter of dreams and nightmares. He adored the visionary Max Jacob. However, it was Goya and the Saturnine vision which was to haunt him the most; perhaps for the same reasons that the "Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," one of the earliest visual horror films, was to awe him.

What kind of painter was Goya? He lived during the latter portion of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century in Spain. He had a boundless vigor; he would lash the vices of the society of his time with allusions or satires of moral or political type, aimed at the excessive liberties of the friars and the rulers. His canvasses were fraught with violent realism. This is the description of one of his works, "The Shooting on the Hill of Principe Pío":

In the middle, an anonymous hero with his arms outstretched, a true symbol of the popular outcry, defies the firing squad, while the others hide their horrified eyes from the tragedy being consummated; on the other side, a pile of corpses in a pool of blood; the whole in the darkness of night, illuminated only by the lamplight, which further accentuates the livid contrasts. (15)

When Goya was older, he became deaf and fearful of other calamities which might befall him. He was also obsessed by the consideration of his own evils. He did a series of "Black Paintings," which covered the walls of his house, paintings on weird, uncanny themes revealing a truly tormented mind. His scenes were

abounding with donkeys, flying witches, hooded figures and monsters. He suffered from recurrent nightmares, and his "Caprices" illustrated the sorcerers, deformed freaks, and caricatures which plagued his sleep. "Comme d'autres reviennent médiums d'atroces maladies, il revient de la sienne en traînant un brouillard d'arrière-monde qui le trouble et l'intrigue plus qu'il ne le terrifie, mais qui met en question le monde dont il s'est éloigné." (S: 49) Saturn was the Roman god whose festival was celebrated as a period of unrestrained license and merriment; however, being under the saturnine influence was one which tended to make people morose, gloomy and grave. It is this aspect which dominates Goya's work, "the accent of incurable night." Sadistic pleasures and brutalities occur in the "Désastres." Malraux refers to both the "Caprices" and the "Désastres" as part of the game of massacre, as fantastic and grotesque as is his own short work of the same title. "Depuis sa maladie, Goya cherchait ceux qui reconnaissent du premier coup l'angoisse commune des hommes: l'humiliation, le cauchemar, le viol, la prison. Ses cachots, ses tortures se déploient maintenant sur l'Espagne entière, et son art est devenu digne de recueillir la confession publique d'un monde qui vocifère ce que chuchotaient ses eaux-fortes." (S: 92) In his "Désastres," his paintings have some of the following titles: "The Sacrifice," "Cannibals," "Fire," "Plague," and "Drowning." His scenes depict cavalry charges, rape, dragged cadavres, fires, bodies falling under bombardment, hangings, shootings, etc. Every victim suggests the presence of the executioner; every prisoner suggests a judge. Goya was a prophet of

the irremediable; according to Malraux, Goya was the greatest interpreter of anguish the West has ever known.

"Saturn devouring his children" really sums up the horror and evil prevalent in man. The demon is that which in man leads him to his own destruction. The man-eating Saturn of Goya's painting, the blood-thirsty and savagely cruel creation of man, is there in every scene of violence throughout Malraux's works.

All of these creative people were born of a climate of violence: social, economic, political, and metaphysical violence which began to infiltrate the entire world, as the unconscious and subconscious minds became reality, as more and more writers discovered the inability to reconcile the depraved, warring world they inhabited with the existence of a charitable God. Their anguish, as Malraux's, is the anguish of an entire generation. They are the scouts in the soul-search for answers and resolutions to problems caused by the inherent evil in man himself, and by the indestructible presence of death.

#### IV

One sociologist who helped shape Malraux's thoughts on violence was Georges Sorel, author of Réflexions sur la violence, an "à propos" work for the beginning of the twentieth century, which was beginning to be shaken at the core sociologically, emotionally, intellectually, and metaphysically speaking. The pre-war "ambiance," all of the revolutionary changes in transportation, transforming ideas on the class structure of society, on

nationalism, on defensive war, on traditional values, and on the death of God, actually prepared the world for Sorel's work on violence. He considered violence to have a value. He called it the normal manifestation of proletarian action; he equated it with work and liberty in action. "La violence, pour moi, c'est une doctrine intellectuelle, la volonté de cerveaux puissants qui savent où ils vont."<sup>(16)</sup> He was a strong advocate of violent action if it served a purpose; he did not support bloody brutalities. The violence of the proletariat, was, for him, necessary to the rebirth of energy in society; it was not equated with servitude or with the "acte gratuit." Violent strikes raise up the masses, rendering them worthy of teaching new ways to the world. Strikes would be the wars of the proletariat. That is what is tried by Garine and the other "conquéran'ts" in Canton in the 1920's. Violence mobilizes society: it need not be terror-oriented; it need not even be physical in nature at all. Sorel visualized a "calm" violence, one which did not attempt to suppress another will. He did not equate violence with nihilism. It was rather a creative force energizing a previously subjugated people. Theoretically, Sorel could justify such a violence; however, as Marxist-Communism soured in practice, so did Sorel's idealized violence, as Malraux discovered time and time again.

Elsewhere, the British writer, D. H. Lawrence, received much praise from Malraux in the domaine of erotic violence, so much so that Malraux wrote the preface to the French translation of Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover. Of course, it was the element of sensuality which interested Malraux for "la conscience

exaltée de la sensualité peut seule combattre la solitude humaine."

(17) According to Malraux as well as to Lawrence, sensuality and eroticism give man the means of self-revelation:

Seul moyen pour l'homme d'atteindre sa vie la plus profonde à travers l'érotisme, seul moyen d'échapper à la condition humaine des hommes de son temps, Lawrence veut posséder la femme par l'esprit comme par la chair. Il s'agit de détruire notre mythe de l'amour, et de créer un nouveau mythe de la sexualité: de faire de l'érotisme une valeur. (18)

If, indeed, eroticism can reveal man to himself, and not just be a means for man to escape from himself, then it has a value. Malraux really believed that eroticism, violent action, and adventure would not only help man to see himself more clearly, but that often they could bind men together in the search of common understanding. Very often though, admittedly, they were merely diversions, ways for man to turn away from contemplating his plight.

One of the greatest influences on the life of Malraux was that of Colonel T. E. Lawrence. During World War II, Malraux had even begun a work on Lawrence, but only one chapter remains. In an article by Denis Boak, we learn that T. E. Lawrence acted as a model for Malraux, and we learn of Malraux's desire to "emulate the Briton." (19) Both men had much in common: a contempt of formal education, a keen intellectual pride; both went to found their careers in the East by means of archaeological expeditions; both had similar literary affiliations including admiration of Nietzsche and Dostoievski; both had political involvement to a cause - Lawrence had the Hashemite cause; Malraux,

the Annamites. Malraux became obsessed with Lawrence. In an interview with Georges Sufferet for L'Express, Malraux talked of the one occasion when he met T. E. Lawrence:

Lawrence, je l'ai rencontré une fois. Une seule, dans le bar d'un grand hôtel, à Paris, je ne sais plus lequel. Je me souviens simplement qu'il était alors dans sa passion des moteurs, ceux des motos et des bateaux. C'était relativement peu de temps avant sa mort. Est-ce qu'il voulait mourir? Je me suis souvent posé la question sans pouvoir y répondre. (20)

This is an interesting question for the author to pose, considering that all great adventurers, including himself, run after death in an attempt to brave it. Georges Mounier called Lawrence and Malraux "mythagogues" and "métapraciciens" - individuals haunted by a metaphysical greed which activism alone could not succeed in distracting, if not appeasing.<sup>(21)</sup> Both had the "démon de l'absolu" goading them on.

When Lawrence finished his Arabian campaign, there was nothing challenging enough for him to do. He had become, at age thirty-three, "figé," a counselor of Churchill; he decided to resign to engage himself as a pilot under a pseudonym. He was obsessed with the need to act. For people of his nature, rest and repose are synonymous with death:

Donner un sens à sa vie veut dire la soumettre à une valeur incontestée par soi-même; les valeurs qui portent en elles cette puissance salvatrice (liberté, charité du coeur, Dieu) impliquent un sacrifice. Au profit des hommes. Elles entendent changer l'ordre du monde, et sont par là, comme l'art, les grandes alliées de l'homme contre le destin. (22)

T. E. Lawrence's life and his telling of it in Seven Pillars of Wisdom were both adventures. Malraux claimed that T. E. wanted

to "tuer son démon à coups de conquêtes et de lucidité."<sup>(23)</sup> In his campaigns, Lawrence received some fifty-eight wounds. "Le livre de Lawrence était...une épreuve."<sup>(24)</sup> He had a violent taste for self-humiliation, had a horror of respectability, poverty and money; he had a knowledge of evil, of man's abyss, and had a need of the absolute. He believed his own salvation or undoing would be entirely his responsibility. "Il ne cherchait pas un apaisement, mais une victoire, une paix conquise."<sup>(25)</sup>

"Blood was always on our hands: we were licensed to it[.] We wrote our lesson with gun or whip immediately in the sullen flesh of the sufferer."<sup>(26)</sup> Malraux was twenty-five when he read of Lawrence's Arabian adventure, of the Turks who killed Armenians and hanged Arabs. "Hundreds of the inhabitants were raped and butchered, the houses fired, and living and dead alike thrown back into the flames."<sup>(27)</sup> He learned of Lawrence's experience in killing the Arab Hamed who had shot the Arab Salem of another tribe; this "eye for an eye" nightmarish experience had to be executed so as to avoid tribal warfare:

[.]Then I made him rise and shot him through the chest. He fell down on the weeds shrieking, with the blood coming out in spurts over his clothes, and jerked about till he rolled nearly to where I was. I fired again, but was shaking so that I only broke his wrist. He went on calling out, less loudly, now lying on his back with his feet towards me, and I leant forward and shot him for the last time in the thick of his neck under the jaw. (28)

T. E. Lawrence himself was physically tortured on his refusal to have sexual relations with a "fleshy Turkish officer." He did, however, receive some kind of masochistic pleasure from his pain: "I remembered smiling idly at him, for a delicious

warmth, probably sexual was swelling through me."<sup>(29)</sup> There are a number of references to sexual intensity, excitement, and warmth in the works of Malraux, having no apparent connection with the particular episode of danger mentioned, such as the feeling experienced by the young Berger in the mine fields of Les Noyers de l'Altenburg. Sexual intensity and danger become synonymous, even if the danger is self-generated. Perversity became a part of life to Colonel Lawrence. There was a question as to whether Lawrence was a pederast; Malraux thought so. "Il conteste aussi que Lawrence était pédéraste: parce qu'il était impuissant."<sup>(30)</sup> Several Malraucian anti-heroes are faced with impotency, and are forced to seek roles of domination to prove to themselves that they exist. Blood lust, destruction, robbery, rape, shootings, blowing up bridges, smashing trucks, wrecking goods, destroying locomotives, sodomy, all of these evil and violently sadistic deeds and perversions left definite impressions on Malraux:

At first Lawrence is seen as the prototype of the adventurer, with emulation and imitation of his action, Malraux's aim; then he is seen not merely as the adventurer, but as the adventure writer, who succeeds in turning his action into one of the great books of the age; finally, when in many ways Malraux's own development, both intellectually and in the field of action, has surpassed Lawrence's own, we find him no longer identifying Lawrence with himself. In this last 'metamorphosis,' to use another term dear to Malraux, we find Lawrence shown as a forerunner of Malraux's own vision of the Tragic, man's fight against his destiny and attempt at self-transcendence. (31)

Lawrence died as the result of a motorcycle "accident," supposedly just after receiving a note from Hitler asking him to come to him. Suicide or accident? The question is without resolution.

Although Malraux never mastered the spoken English language, he did appreciate the works of the leading English and American writers, such as D. H. Lawrence and T. E. Lawrence, as we have already seen, and some of the American writers who were not much older than he, such as Hemingway and Faulkner. In fact, as he left the plane to make his appeal to the American public on behalf of the Spanish Republic, he was carrying a copy of Dashiell Hammett's intrigue, murder and violence-laden novel, The Maltese Falcon.

Perhaps one of the American writers who most influenced Malraux was Ernest Hemingway, who shared the same battlefield with him - that of Fascist Spain. Both were to produce a major work based on their action and anguish on Spanish soil. Hemingway is the "frère de Malraux[.] frères ils sont par le talent, la vocation, l'expérience, le courage."<sup>(32)</sup> Both Malraux and Hemingway were haunted by fundamental man. Both engaged early in action; both had a strong longing to participate in the making of destiny. Both needed to create their own values, and to realize themselves, in view of a corrupt and decaying world which produced their lost generation. Malraux and Hemingway grew under the "reign of violence." This violence was no longer physical in nature; it tore at the emotional and intellectual core of man, as it had done to T. E. Lawrence, creating men who would not allow their destiny to

dominate them. All three men watched civilization disintegrate around them, through World War I and the period which followed it. All three were aware of the absurdity of life, the suffering, and the overwhelming omnipresence of death. Whereas T. E. Lawrence renounced life in 1935, Malraux and Hemingway were beginning to discover a new ideal, fighting for liberty and dignity in Spain, at about the same time.

Hemingway and Malraux battled the same "fatalités": misery, suffering, time, age, a hostile universe, and more. Both experienced the tremendous need to live, the will to power, and the importance of eroticism as a test of human will. Both were anti-Fascists, engaging their creative faculties in a revolt against oppression, and, at the same time, death. Both arrived at virile fraternity and solidarity; both made their heroes subservient to a greater cause, such as human dignity. Both tried to resolve the question of destiny, and to rid the human condition of the absurd, by the triumph of life. Perhaps we can say that Malraux's "maisons de la culture" helped him to somewhat succeed in this task, whereas we know, due to Hemingway's unfortunate death in 1961, that he, at least seemingly, never quite did succeed.

Still another American writer with whom Malraux could identify was William Faulkner. In Faulkner's works, violence is imminent even when not actual. The absurd is the rule, part of the human condition; it is the agent of omnipresent evil. In Sanctuary (to which Malraux wrote the preface for the French

version), a girl is abducted and raped. In his other works, suicides, murders and castrations are all representative of the evil in the world. This is a "monde où l'homme n'existe qu'écrasé." Sanctuaire, c'est l'intrusion de la tragédie grecque dans le roman policier."<sup>(33)</sup> Faulkner's works deal with the human heart in conflict with itself. This conflict will yield violence. It is clear that violence in the 1800's and 1900's was, and is not, a phenomenon of one country or one era alone.

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"Violence is the indispensable element of this world overshadowed by Saturn, and it permeates the essays on art as well as the novels. The atmosphere of violence and death makes each action and word of the heroes appear extremely significant." (34) Malraux's heroes attempt to boldly face death, and the absurd. By doing so, they escape being entirely crushed by it. Characters such as König, the professional torturer of La Condition Humaine, are Saturn's delegates here on earth. "Such is Malraux's obsession with the Inhuman that he cannot look away even when recoil exceeds attraction."<sup>(35)</sup> If Saturn and Satan are one and the same, if the evil of this world takes so many and varied forms, how can man successfully wrestle Saturn, the evil within himself, his tendency towards self-destruction, and will his violent combat against the demon eventually yield him a world free of violence? "Tragedy, in fine, is man's answer to this universe that crushes him so pitilessly. Destiny scowls upon him: his answer is to sit down and

paint her where she stands."<sup>(36)</sup> In this way, by confronting destiny via works of literature or works of art, man immortalizes himself and does not permit himself to be humiliated or conquered by it, even though he can do nothing permanent to eradicate either violence or the absurd or death itself. Malraux and all of the literary and artistic figures before him, all those obsessed with death and destiny, were capable, through their creative works, to challenge their fate, by facing it and "painting" it. They thus immortalized themselves as well.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Joseph Hoffmann, L'Humanisme de Malraux, p.18.
- <sup>2</sup>Pol Gaillard, Les critiques de notre temps et Malraux, p. 106: "Le fond de Malraux, c'est Pascal." ( G. Mounin)
- <sup>3</sup>Samuel E. Stokes, Jr. "Malraux and Pascal," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, VI, no.3, autumn, 1965, p.286.
- <sup>4</sup>André Lagarde et Laurent Michard, XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: III, p.147.
- <sup>5</sup>Blaise Pascal, Pensées. The Provincial Letters, trans. by W. F. Trotter and Thomas M'Crie, p.60.
- <sup>6</sup>Blaise Pascal, Pensées, p.274.
- <sup>7</sup>Robert Payne, Dostoievski: A Human Portrait, p.114.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p.363.
- <sup>9</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, trans. with an intro. by Walter Kaufmann, p.152.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp.330, 331.
- <sup>11</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner, trans. with commentary by Walter Kaufmann, p.60.
- <sup>12</sup>Roger Stéphane, Fin d'une jeunesse, p.64.
- <sup>13</sup>Wallace Fowlie, Climate of Violence: The French Literary Tradition from Baudelaire to the Present, p.21.
- <sup>14</sup>Robert Payne, A Portrait of André Malraux, p.25.
- <sup>15</sup>Ovidio-Cesar Paredes Herrera, New Guide to the Prado Gallery, trans. by John Macnab Walder, p.110.
- <sup>16</sup>Avriel Goldberger, Visions of a new Hero: the heroic life according to André Malraux and earlier advocates of human grandeur, p.186.

- <sup>17</sup> André Malraux, Préface à L'Amant de Lady Chatterley, par D. H. Lawrence, traduit de l'anglais par F. Roger Cornaz, p.ii.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.v.
- <sup>19</sup> Denis Boak, "Malraux and T. E. Lawrence," M. L. R., April, 1966, p.218.
- <sup>20</sup> L'Express, 22 mars 1971, p.144.
- <sup>21</sup> Jean Lacouture, André Malraux: une vie dans le siècle, p.205.
- <sup>22</sup> André Malraux, "N'était-ce donc que cela?" Liberté de l'Esprit, April, May, June 1949, p.49.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.86.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.117.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.118.
- <sup>26</sup> T. E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, p.31.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.93.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.182.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.445.
- <sup>30</sup> Stéphane, op. cit., p.49.
- <sup>31</sup> Boak, op. cit., p.224.
- <sup>32</sup> Claude Mauriac, Malraux ou le mal du héros, p.32.
- <sup>33</sup> André Malraux, Préface à Sanctuaire, par William Faulkner, p.iv.
- <sup>34</sup> Goldberger, op. cit., p.166.
- <sup>35</sup> Loc. cit.
- <sup>36</sup> F. L. Lucas, Tragedy, p.58.

**PART II**

**METAPHYSICAL VIOLENCE: FROM MYTH TO ACTUALITY**

## CHAPTER I

### IMAGES OF VIOLENCE IN THE EARLY WRITINGS

- I. Man confronts himself: the legacy of the death of God is intense anguish: La Tentation de l'Occident, "D'une jeunesse européenne."
- II. The strange and terrible forms of violence: Lunes en Papier
- III. Fanciful violence takes on human character: Ecrit pour une idole à trompe
- IV. The metamorphosis is accomplished: violence abandons the realm of imagination: Royaume farfelu

"It was Malraux who, in La Tentation de l'Occident, introduced the word 'absurd' into the modern philosophical vocabulary in a contention that, to the eye of modern man, the universe appeared fatally bereft of meaning, because of the loss of compelling and explanatory religious belief and, with it, the collapse of any direction-giving concept of man." (1)

André Malraux's first piece of serious writing was La Tentation de l'Occident, published when the author was twenty-five years of age. It was in this essay and in the "farfelu" writings to be analyzed shortly, that Malraux made his first written contacts with violence. It was a metaphysical violence which seized hold of the young man - a violence which struck Malraux's generation, tearing away at the foundations and beliefs which had kept previous generations sane, offering nothing in substitution but a kind of aimlessness and a very real anguish. Others of his generation had tried through anarchy and violent acts of destruction to shake the world at its roots; Malraux used the violence of new, radical thought in his early essays, and the violence of "farfelu," goyaesque imagery in his short fantasy writings to awaken the world to the various crises it was facing, and to sublimate his own violent feelings before this incredibly disorganized, irrational, inhuman world which must have caused him to suffer severe nightmares.

## I

Both Western and Oriental cultures were undergoing crises of different natures. With God dead, and man not faring too much better, Western man looked into himself to determine a reason to exist. "What is Man? The one who must define, question and accuse himself, the one who is both knife and wound, victim and executioner."<sup>(2)</sup> Man has not only the right, but the

obligation to call himself to task since he is well aware of what demoralizes and destroys him. Man's role in post World War I Europe was a new, unhappy role. It meant that he would be his own judge, jury and hangman if necessary, so that Man could survive in a world that would not be anarchistic. "The bloodiness, violence and torture" which Malraux adopts are means to man's self-awareness. Man must endure painful self-examination to prove that his existence is of some value, despite the absurd conditions which envelop him.<sup>(3)</sup> He has to; he has no alternative. The "mise en question" of man is his sole way of constantly renewing the significance of his presence on earth. Western man felt that through his acts, he would provide a justification for his existence; he was to find this insufficient. His activism was to net him "a cemetery of dead conquerors."<sup>(4)</sup>

To relieve himself of the inner turmoil caused by the absence of a higher Being, Man went in search of himself. He tried any means he thought would help him reach an understanding of the universe and of himself. Violence was often used simply to oblige Man to look at himself completely, to strip him of his dignity, to force him to humble himself before his destiny, to compel him to feel hate for that which eventually would take his life from him, to urge him to fight this destiny with all his physical, mental, and emotional capacity:

The self-castigations of Man reflect his quest for self-definition, for unity. He (Malraux) shows man seeking action and death to survive them with increasing vigor. Man is not 'Man' unless thrown back upon himself, and not 'tragic' unless he accepts to act again despite the knowledge of his return to nakedness. (5)

All that this agitation of the Western soul needed was appeasement. Suddenly, with the advent of air travel, and increased voyages in general, the world seemed to diminish in size, and East met West. Western Man was tempted by what he encountered. His tormented mind longed for the serenity which belonged to his Eastern brother. In the East, man had learned to accord himself with the great cosmic movement; he would lose himself to the supremacy of the whole. This Eastern calmness and quietude became the temptation of the West. At the same time, a growing awareness of what it was to be an individual, to live as an independent and viable entity, had invaded the East.

La Tentation de l'Occident, an epistolary essay, deals with two young men in correspondence: A. D., a Frenchman of twenty-five, is traveling through China; Ling is Chinese, twenty-three, and is traveling in Europe. A. D. is André. The questions, comments, and reactions he has are those of the author. However, the author is present in Ling as well.

Ling observes that Westerners lack serenity, that it is they who invented the devil, or as we will come to know it, "le démon de l'absolu." "La création sans cesse renouvelée par l'action d'un monde destiné à l'action, voilà ce qui me semblait alors l'âme de l'Europe, dont la soumission à la volonté de l'homme dominait les formes." (TO: 20) A. D. knows that Western man cannot be separated from his intensity; his need to experience fully and feel all degrees of pleasure and pain is ingrained in his personality. Ling is repelled by the ruins he sees in Europe; to him they are not lasting works of art, but monuments of man's

barbarism to other men. To A. D., they are evidence of man's lasting presence and proof of fundamental man. Ling compares the Western and Eastern philosophies of dreams; he speaks of how the Oriental is calm in dreaming, whereas Occidental man envisions conquered cities, and lusts for glory and power. Western man's "will to power" is his defiance of the absurd, his overt combat with destiny. Malraux explains one of the causes of Western man's "mal" - he wants the world brought to him; the Eastern philosophy offers man to the world, encourages him to melt as one with the universe.

Ling paints many of the images of violence which distress the Western world. "Vos dieux même, et leur grandeur tachée, comme leur image, de larmes et de sang, une puissance sauvage les anime." (TO: 25) At the core of Western man, even at the base of his major religion, Christianity, was a barbaric "heart of darkness." (One need only recall the crucifixion of Christ.) Ling wonders about Occidental man's need of brutality: "Vous voulez vaincre. Que trouvez-vous sous vos pauvres victoires?" (TO: 31) His own philosophy proclaims him alive without his need to act; violence or intense action are words which are meaningless to Ling. "A peine comprenez-vous encore que pour être il ne soit pas nécessaire d'agir, et que le monde vous transforme bien plus que vous ne le transformez..." (TO: 33) The only people to know anguish are Westerners. (Many Malraucian characters: i. e. - Gisors, Jaime Alvear's father - try to escape their anguish by espousing Eastern philosophies; they are doomed to

failure for serenity does not convince Western man that he exists.)

Ling is cognizant of A. D.'s frustrations in reference to the absurd condition which defines Western man. He is also aware of the man-God rapport, and how its very foundations were born of violence. (Again, a brief rereading of the Old Testament will fill one in on the fratricides, assassinations, stonings, infanticides, etc.) Ling has even witnessed the love relationship of Western man, one which is based on conquest, humiliation, and suffering, most often, of both parties involved. Again, Western man's love relationship is one based on constraint, eroticism, and the will to power. Man sees himself often through the eyes of his victim; without a victim, man falls prey to his impotency, not just in sexual affairs, but in his real incapacity to challenge his fate and conquer death, his true opponent. "Il n'est aucune de vos passions qui, autant que l'amour, caressent la bête, puis l'éveillent. Lorsque je m'efforce à séparer votre tourment de celui de la conquête, il me semble parfois assister à une recherche de l'unité pleine de souffrance." (TO:58) The Western game of love is more of an erotic spectacle, where masochism and sadism force the partners to acknowledge the relative strengths of destiny and human will. Eroticism becomes another means of self-interrogation, a way to castigate oneself, a way to use love not as a crutch to escape the absurd, but as a tool to penetrate the absurd, to constantly be aware of its compelling presence.

"Les hommes, qui depuis plusieurs milliers d'années cherchent leurs limites et leur image, n'ont jamais été satisfaits que par la destruction de leur recherche. Une race soumise à la preuve du geste, et promise par là au plus sanglant destin" (TO: 67, 74), that is one definition of mankind. Western man attempts self-knowledge even if the price he has to pay is his reason. Western man needs his gestures and deeds to prove he exists, even if such proofs might result in his eventual death. Ling recognizes the contradiction: "[.]Le soir européen est lamentable et vide, vide comme une âme de conquérant." (TO: 81) One may succeed in conquering, but what good does one ever accomplish, and what evil has actually been eradicated? (This is what the Seven Sins, the Fireman, and the narrator of the "farfelu" works are to discover, as does the author, after a long marriage with violence.)

Ling becomes momentarily attracted to the earthiness of violence:

Le désordre des allées et des arbustes, la présence de ces maisons étrangères détruisaient si cruellement cette beauté calme accablée d'années que je songeais à l'achèvement honteux d'une vie héroïque. Royaume de la ferueur, quelles que soient ta gloire ancienne et ta noblesse, il est une heure où la plaie que tu portes au coeur ne peut plus être cachée, et saignée. Dans l'agonie des déesses recueillies je trouvais une émotion que je n'eusse osé demander à leur gloire. Le sang qui coulait sur leurs corps les détruisait comme les flammes. J'aimais leur image meurtrière. Leur mort m'attachait passionnément à elles, et l'adolescent que j'étais s'enivra longtemps de l'odeur lourde de leur sang terrestre. (TO:92)

The attraction and the smell of death does not last long, for Ling would not trade his peace of mind for the anguish of the modern European: "La réalité absolue a été pour vous Dieu, puis l'homme; mais l'homme est mort, après Dieu, et vous cherchez avec angoisse celui à qui vous pourriez confier son étrange héritage." (TO: 128)

In a shorter essay entitled "D'une jeunesse européenne" published the following year, Malraux pursues his thought further. However, his point of view is somewhat more positive in that he sees hope for the troubled "jeunesse européenne": "Cette jeunesse éparse sur toutes les terres d'Europe, unie par une sorte de fraternité inconnue, que voyons-nous en elle? La volonté lucide de montrer ses combats à défaut d'une doctrine." (JE: 148) This will be his response all the way through his novels - a fraternal combat against anguish, a way to valiantly battle the irremediable through lucidity and human will. "The individual armed with the naked strength of the will - therein ultimately lies the passion of the West."<sup>(6)</sup> This is the "armor" of the young Malraucian hero: he is a solitary figure, born in the West, escaping to the East, desperately in need of the Orient to fulfill each test of strength and human will that he sets before him.

Ling toyed with the idea of violence for the sake of China's survival; he rejected it because, during his observation of Western man, he learned how man could be corrupted by the power he wielded. Man's destructive instincts were representative of the evil in him; the desire for power only created an illusion of triumph over fate.

Malraux had experienced both philosophies since he had lived for a time in Indochina. He was in sympathy with Eastern tranquillity, but could not disengage himself from his Western intensity. "Being" was not enough for him; it did not alleviate life with the absurd. Violence seemed to respond to a nerve deep within him, an impulse guiding him to adventure, urging him to ignore the negative consequences of doomed combat, appealing to his ardent need to contest death.

## II

The "farfelu" writings span a period of eight years; they were begun when the author was just coming out of his teens, and they were terminated almost entirely (there are a few scenes in the novels which remind us of the earlier works), before the author turned thirty. These bizarre, fantastic works indicate a second, novel way in which Malraux was able to express in literary fashion the violence which afflicted his soul. The "farfelu" works reveal a great deal about the personal anxieties of the young author in the particular images and the horrific forms of violence chosen.

The first of the writings is Lunes en Papier, published in 1921. In this early work, we learn of the major fascination of Malraux: death. When he prefaced the French translation of Sanctuary, Malraux wrote that a poet expresses what fascinates him, not to deliver himself from it, but to change its nature. Malraux never stopped being obsessed with death, and his entire

life has been devoted to endeavors to change the very nature of death, to deny its power to tyrannize man and perpetuate his state of subjugated being.

"The strange and terrible are always behind the human condition - to illuminate it and throw it into relief."<sup>(7)</sup> Certainly, at first glance, it would be most difficult to extract the human element from Lunes en Papier, although the strange and terrible are vividly present. We can trace this back to some of the early fascinations or obsessions of Malraux. It is known, in psychology, that one way to overcome one's fear of something is by putting oneself in contact with this thing; the purpose is to compel one's will to dominate one's fears. Malraux, it seems, detested insects and snakes, yet, he never avoided them to any extent. He practically sought them out in Indochina: his works are filled with serpent characters, insects, etc. One of his characters, Grabot of La Voie Royale, overcame his fear of scorpions by allowing himself to be stung by one. As Goya's canvasses abound in Goya's frights, Malraux's jungles and deserts are filled with mosquitos, plains of scorpions, etc. In addition, M. Roedig informs us that one of the great pleasures Malraux had as a child, was the reading of history books, particularly the tales of the barbaric invasions "all bedizened with appropriate horrors and grisly tortures."<sup>(8)</sup>

M. Vandegans feels that Lunes en Papier "dessine Malraux avant Malraux. Mais pour établir qu'il n'y a qu'un seul Malraux."<sup>(9)</sup> He continues tracing the origins of Lunes and the other "farfelu" works. In 1920, Malraux was working on the review La Connaissance;

he had also written on the origins of Cubist poetry. He had even helped to publish certain clandestine editions of Sade's works. He frequented a group which included Jacob, the visionary, and Florent Fels, director of Action, a revue with radical, often anarchistic points of view. He published an article on the Chants de Maldoror by Lautréamont, the famous songs of violence, hate, and evil. He lived the Dadaist movement and rejected it, but assimilated much of the extreme, artistic thought to come out of the period. The birth of Lunes coincided with two predominant attitudes held by the intellectual élite - the desire, above all, to accomplish one's will, no matter what the cost, and the knowledge that whatever deed you might attempt to accomplish, death would be the irreversible outcome. Malraux met Pascal Pia at this time, a young adventurer who personified action, consciousness, individualism, and sensitivity for him. His other immediate influences were the Cubist painters who violently broke with traditional painting to unite lucidity with creative imagination. Another 1920 event involved one of Malraux's friends, René Latouche, who committed suicide, for he could think of no reason to continue living. He was barely twenty.

Malraux's own roots were being pulled up one by one. His renewed contacts with death, his "broken" home, his adolescent memories of the field of war, his break with conventional education, the changes in art and poetry, his frequenting bad company, revolutionary clubs and strange night spots, all of this finally exacted payment of Malraux. One of the greatest problems Malraux faced was that he could never break completely with the

past; although he worshipped the new creativity and intensity of the art forms of his day, he could never cease admiring the beauty and the harmony of past art. He would always be both the A. D. and Ling of La Tentation de l'Occident; this search for simultaneous intensity and appeasement would continue to rip him apart internally.

The conflicts within finally voiced themselves in the strange and terrible Lunes. Death and Evil are omnipresent; even the characters of this fantasy will try all within their power to combat their two enemies. "Farfelu" is a term which signified an air bubble; it existed in old French as "famfaluca>fanfelue, fanfeluce." "Follis," which originally meant punched-out bag in Latin, became the root of "fou," or mad. In any case, "farfelu" refers to empty bubbles or vain trifles. Malraux picked up the Rabelaisien use of the term "farfelu" involving anything of minor or no importance whatsoever, something entirely inconsequential. The "farfelu" works are bizarre, crazy, full of fantasy, and vain - just as life is - when up against death. After all, what could be more fragile, than life as symbolized by an air bubble? What could be more absurd or more incomprehensible?

"The heroes are abstractions who change shape and color, and hop about like luminous dragonflies; the villain is Death wearing a smoking jacket; and the adventures take place against a background of Cubist colors."<sup>(10)</sup> This is, in the words of the author, a "Petit Livre où l'on trouve la relation de quelques luttes peu connues des hommes." (LP:13) Malraux's characters are to be plunged almost directly into the action of battle. They

are formed by the surreal transformation of objects. The moon character and her children lose no opportunity to destroy the balloons they see on the lake below; the balloons, in turn, are perpetrating violence of their own by tying up the inhabitants of a palace. The spirit of the lake, shaped like a cat, condemns the spheres to death in the name of justice; they are to be hanged. He demands that the balloons stick out their tongues; they refuse. The cat then hangs himself. There are even musical instruments which suffer punishment. "Ce matin, les ocarinas soudés aux rochers susurraient: 'Assassins, assassins!' Je me suis approché d'eux adroitement et les ai empoisonnés avec du persil." (LP: 20)

The introduction already presents torture, poisoning, murder and suicide. The balloons, however, have the final say, for they do stick out their tongues after the death of the cat. Could Malraux be playing a double role in his Lunes? It is possible for him to be both death and its avenger. He had always been closely identified with cats; they come up a number of times in his writings (a cat is the only living witness to the act of murder which sets Tchen - La Condition Humaine - apart from other men), and many photographs show him "au chat emblématique." Could he be making use of the cat in a sublimated fashion to express his death wish, or could he be celebrating the triumph of the balloons over the cat, or death? Isn't the choice of the cat brilliant, for a cat may taste of death nine times, triumphing over it eight. How many "renaissances" was the author permitted? It is most interesting that symbolically the very delicate bal-

loons do seem to triumph over death in this initial contest, by use of their intelligence alone.

Part one is entitled "Combats." The spheres which have already done battle, will soon be engaged in additional skirmishes after they undergo a metamorphosis. They are transformed into flowers and fruit; the stuffed alligators of the antique stores take flight; things are again, or still of, the surreal realm. One of the fruits opens releasing the nine major characters of Lunes. The frightened nine take refuge under trees with "bleeding hearts" attached to them. Of the nine, two burst, leaving five sins, a musician, and a former chemist, Hifili. These latter two replace the two dead sins, making a total of seven deadly sins. One of the sins, Pride, speaks of the death of God and His subtle replacement by Satan. He suggests that they in turn replace Satan; first they will have to kill Death, Satan's foremost assistant. With God dead, Satan is alone to dominate the earth, keeping evil an integral part of the development of man.

Once they have reached the decision to kill Death, they begin their journey to its kingdom which is known as "royaume farfelu," and remains synonymous with the kingdom of death for the eight years of Malraux's literary career to follow. (Most of Malraux's works include a real journey or a symbolic one through life to obtain one's goals.) They are met by the Cable, Death's servant, a destructive, terrifying serpent-like creature with "bleeding hearts" around its neck. As they travel through the dark woods (all of Malraux's characters inevitably journey

"in the dark" for this is the privileged domaine of anguish, the home of the absurd, a place of terror, the domaine and very existence of the "moons"), they see mutilated kangaroos. The sins finish by burning the hearts around the Cable, and proceed to the Kingdom of Death. At a river, one of the sins experiences the taste of flesh fruit which "lui éclaboussaient la figure de sang sucré." (LP: 32) The seven arrive at an inn, and agree to spend the night. Strange things occur during the night: a phonograph plays, accompanying an act of sexual intercourse engaged in by two of the sins (all of the sins are male.) Serpent-like "bigophones" are in the room, capable of driving those who listen to their couplets, insane. The musician tames the "bigophones," the sins escape from the inn, and continue on their way to the "farfelu" kingdom, or the Kingdom of Death. Mutilation, blood, burning, perverse sexual activity, are all part and parcel of the Malraucian kingdom of nightmares, no less violent nor compelling than Lautréamont's Chants before him.

Part two or "Voyages" having ended, the next part is entitled "Victoire." Our heroes meet Death face to face, wearing her smoking jacket and being ultra-modern in her aluminum vertebrae. Her Royal Physician is none other than Hifili who prescribes an acid bath for what ails the Queen; she learns of her poisoning, but accepts it as she is quite tired of living. "Empoisonnée n'est pas le mot exact. Je suis corrodée...Je n'aurais jamais pu me suicider; quelle reconnaissance ne dois-je pas à ceux qui voulurent bien m'éviter cette peine?" (LP: 44) Death died, but the seven sins had forgotten why they killed her. Thus, the

absurd triumphs over man:

Le monde est le règne de la malice, de la cruauté, de l'absurde, du combat toujours renouvelé contre les forces ennemies. Il est dominé par la Mort. La banalité de l'univers, l'ennui qu'il engendre sont si insupportables qu'on peut imaginer que la Mort elle-même s'en lasse, au point d'accepter allègrement de disparaître. Si pourtant ses sujets réalisaient leur vœu suprême de puissance, qui est de la détruire, le sens de leur entreprise leur échapperait aussitôt. Car le comble de l'absurde est que sa suppression entraîne l'écroulement de cela seul qui conférait une finalité à la vie: la volonté de le réduire. (11)

The vast wealth of imagery having certain Flemish folklore, Perrault fairy tales, and Rabelaisian fantasy at its source, still exhibits the originality of Malraux. Kangaroos with banderillas, hearts that bleed when picked from trees but heal themselves shortly thereafter, fruits that taste of sugar-sweet blood, repugnant serpent-like animals, balloons with tongues, suffering musical instruments, Death in a smoking jacket - these are Malraux's "Désastres," the products of a sorely disquieted spirit. Images of such a violent break with reality could only reflect the dissatisfaction of the author with the state of affairs of the world as it was. Even the "bigophones," which seem harmless enough, must be done away with for they represent an attempt to shut out an awareness of man's real condition; they are, as Pascal would say, a "divertissement."

Malraux's first heroes are on an action adventure. They accomplish their task, but they know not why they have acted. It is interesting that this reaction of Malraux's first heroes will be identical to that of the heroes of the last novel: the

German soldiers of the First World War don't understand why they must gas the Russians who are not evil in and of themselves - the violence cycle will complete itself. It is also important to note that in this first work, evil is not really personified in a human entity; it is rather an intangible, pervading presence.

An interesting interpretation of Lunes was made by Lucien Goldmann, in his Pour une sociologie du roman.<sup>(12)</sup> He felt that Lunes was the battleground of the non-conforming Dada and Surrealist writers and painters against the bourgeois society of the time. The moon children and the cat were representatives of society persecuting and torturing the balloons (non-conventional writers). These intellectuals then become the seven sins combatting a decadent art and literary form. I don't particularly agree with M. Goldmann's analysis although I see it as plausible. It seems to me that the pathos in Lunes is much too personal to be written off as an intellectual "jeu de mots." Malraux's nightmares were very real and very troubling; I suspect that during the period of his late adolescence, he had difficulty sleeping, hence the large number of nights spent wandering from "boîte" to "boîte." Being afraid of sleep because of the fear of not waking, contemplating how best to combat the absurd - I would hypothesize that both of these contributed to the making of the adventurer and seeker of meaningful action against death who was to materialize in the 1920's.

## III

Écrit pour une idole à trompe is a tri-part fantasy begun in 1921 and finished in 1927. It appeared in different revues as installments under the following titles: "Les hérissons apprivoisés," "Journal d'un pompier du jeu de massacre," and "Écrit pour un ours en peluche." The three articles together form Écrit pour une idole à trompe, an unfinished book of the author. The first two articles were written prior to the author's Indochina adventure; the third terminates in a way similar to that of Lunes, suggesting to us that the author's Indochina experience did not greatly alleviate the anxiety from which he suffered.

What Malraux attempts to do in Écrit pour une idole à trompe, is to rival the absurd by creating violent images of broader and more surrealist scope than in Lunes. Malraux is blatantly dissonant; his purpose is again to shock the reader into looking into himself, to establish his own way to justify his existence via his personal efforts.

The major character in "Les hérissons apprivoisés" is a Fireman. The choice of such a character is no accident; firemen have always been connected with violence and death. In the story, things are not following their normal routine; all of the characters behave peculiarly. Even Virtue is revealed as old and ugly. Objects begin a strange metamorphosis into grotesque cha-

racters, and we are back in Goya's "Désastres." The departure of a character called Charlatan ushers in a sense of foreboding. The shadows of the Fireman and his friends are threatened with assassination:

[.]Je suis certain d'avoir, un matin, trouvé dans les buissons deux fusils oubliés ou perdus; et je songe qu'il ne serait pas impossible qu'ils vinssent afin de pouvoir joindre à leurs bibelots quelques-unes de ces belles médailles par quoi leur municipalité récompense les assassinats imaginaires. Pourquoi nos ombres disparaissent-elles parfois? N'est-ce point parce qu'on les tue? (HA: 173)

The threat of violence, the question of assassination involving the characters' shadows, indicates that violence is metaphysically present, and its presence is sufficient to make the ordinary seem extraordinary.

It is night, the time when man's distress increases because of his solitude and isolation, the time chosen by the sins to make their journey in Lunes. Uncanny, bizarre and malicious things occur: ducks enter the large hall of the hotel where the Fireman and his friends are staying, and the ducks torture reed-pipes (again, we have instruments being tortured - like the "sweet potato" and the "bigophones" of Lunes which are poisoned or charmed - the reed-pipes must also be taken care of for they are means of escaping reality); more ducks, desirous of entering the hall to dance "s'assommaient, se pourfendaient, se coupaient en deux à coups de queue pour entrer[.]Les canards combattants sont tous morts[.]Les canards danseurs sont morts ensuite[.]Ils ont gémi tant qu'a duré leur agonie." (HA: 175)

The violence is there, but it is inhuman and unreal; it resembles a nightmare.

The Fireman and his friends decide to take refuge at the Charlatan's. The Fireman escapes first; as he looks back, he sees the kitchen staff armed with sticks, preventing his friends from escaping, actually beating them back. A fire starts in the inn, and the Fireman takes off:

Et je me suis enfui à toute jambes, sans regarder davantage les ombres précises des marmitons, réunies pour une farandole, courir autour de l'auberge transformée en feu de Bengale rose, et faire rôtir à ses flammes les poulets volés qu'ils avaient cachés sous leur tablier. (HA: 177)

Why does the Fireman flee? Why as a Fireman doesn't he combat the flames? What kind of untold experience did the author live to create such a trauma? Night coupled with fire, people forced to remain in a burning building, these were images created before the author lived the Spanish Civil War, before he engaged himself in World War II, even before he had a chance to view the violent horrors of life for the Annamites. Yet, some of the most enduring visual scenes of terror were described prior to Malraux's prolonged encounters with real violence. This is most unusual, to say the least. Perhaps, some of the horror was inspired by the "accidental" suicide of his grandfather, which he might have witnessed; perhaps, a few of the "dark" visions reflected the human ash-ridden fields where Malraux and his young friends were obliged to take their lunch.

The second segment entitled "Journal d'un pompier du jeu de massacre" begins, appropriately enough, with a word of

violence in its title. Could the "massacre" refer to the demise of the friends of the Fireman in the previous episode? It is night again. The Fireman is back with us; he and his (new?) friends are at a dinner, but the ground beneath them is unstable - it is plastic. The characters seem distorted vis-à-vis their reflections in the water basins. Suddenly, the guests disappear into the wood of the table; fantasy is again ever-present.

The Fireman and a character called Strainer remain. They look for seats and finish by sitting on four wooden, dead-drunk people. A projection ray lights up a series of skeletons of dogs, cats, monkeys, and women. (Malraux's misogyny has him grouping women with animals; we cannot forget that Death was personified as a woman as well.) A projection light tamer tries so hard to get the light to stick out its "ray" (isn't this the same scene which occurs between the cat and the balloons of Lunes?), that he strangles it. (Here, the tamer wins, and not the ray; this can be interpreted as a win for death.) The chair under the Fireman speaks to him disclosing himself as the Devil. The Devil explains that there is no more morality. "Je tentais les hommes, mais ils me tentaient davantage. Il est possible que le mal m'ait créé." (PJM: 18) We are back to the age-old problem of the Devil, and the existence of Evil in the world. In Lunes, the characters kill Death, but they lose sight as to why they are supposed to kill her- because she is the Devil's agent, and is responsible for all misery and agony on earth. They must forget their goal, for Malraux already knows that you cannot kill the Evil in the world without, in effect, killing yourself. Man

can always try to combat evil, but, unfortunately, by definition, it is an integral part of him. He can, however, fight hard to conquer his own "beast." Of interest in this section is the death imagery of the skeleton; this recalls to us Death in her smoking jacket of Lunes, and impresses upon us the obsession of Malraux with death and images of violence. Again, the violence perpetrated on the projection ray is still not human, and certainly not real.

"Ecrit pour un ours en peluche" is our third story. The omnipresent Fireman again plays an important role. A musician is needed to fight Treble Clef, the serpent monster who deflowers virgins. The Fireman is an expert musician; he will charm the monster into submission. Here, we see violence seduced by "divertissement" (music) in an attempt to conquer or flee from (we know not which), the monster, Death. Malraux's "Ecrit" reads like journal entries: "Chaque jour, nous découvrons la défloration criminelle de quelques jeunes filles. Le nombre des victimes augmentait chaque semaine." (EOP: 114)

The Fireman takes his saxophone to Treble Clef, and announces that he is there to prepare the beast for its annual tribute. Low and behold, as he commences playing, the beast unravels itself, twirls about him, and tells him, "she" loves him! (The female serpent monster which deflowers virgins is a bizarre and a particularly repugnant, erotic image.) The Fireman is dumbfounded. Treble Clef explains that she had always found men ugly, but he was different. (There are traces of self-doubt which date back to the time when Malraux's mother was said to have fre-

quently informed him of his awkward looks, and his large ears.) He seduces her, and conquers her: "[.]Vainqueur, je fis à Bhouzylle l'entrée triomphale." (EOP: 121) Although it is not developed in any great depth, Malraux's view on love and sex is already exposed in this brief relationship between the Fireman and Treble Clef; love is based on the submission of one person to another, allowing one of the parties to the relationship to be triumphant or a conqueror, exercising his will to power.

The Fireman returns to Bhouzylle a hero. Before Treble Clef is put to death, all criminals are executed. "La veille, on avait procédé à l'exécution de tous les criminels incarcérés dans les prisons de la ville; elle avait eu lieu ainsi qu'à l'ordinaire au moyen de la pendaison par les pieds." (EOP: 123) The entire scene, including Treble Clef's death, is treated as a "fait divers," and not as the solemn occasion that it is. "Le bourreau enfonça dans la tête de la Clef-de-Sol une longue aiguille. Elle poussa un cri aigu, se tordit deux fois et mourut." (EOP: 124) Treble Clef is now the "victime," and the "bourreau" has executed her with proper torture. Every scene of violence is reduced to a victim-victor relationship. With the death of Treble Clef, night arrives again. Instead of the feeling of gay relief, there is a deafening silence, which seems to reign over the town, as if the people are not cognizant of the fact that they have just dealt Death and Evil a mighty blow, or as if they no longer care. Perhaps they sense the futility of their effort, knowing that when violence is used to deal with violence, evil is not eliminated from the world.

Malraux's acid bath is replaced by an agonizing needle in the head; this time, Death does not die alone, but in the company of inverted corpses. This time, the monster is seen as having genuinely destructive tendencies, *rē* the virgins. In fact, the whole scope of violence, while depending heavily on the presence of death, has expanded to include human-like characters, such as the Fireman-musician, the criminals, etc.

Malraux's images are, of course, not entirely of his own inspiration. Due to his extreme sensitivity, he was strongly affected by the fantasies he came across in Hoffmann's tales - the carnival characters, the strange, nocturnal scenes, the bursts of flame in the darkness. Hoffmann's descriptions of funeral cortèges added fire to the already quite bright attraction death held for Malraux. It is also good to mention again the Chants de Maldoror, and Lautréamont's distorted, perverted imagery, which so impressed Malraux. One author feels that Bhouzylle is the Aztec town of Tenocatitlán; Malraux had read much of the mysterious dark powers of the human-sacrificing Indians of the Yucatan peninsula. Vandegans speculates on the possibility that Treble Clef is an Aztec invention, reminiscent of Ciuacoatl, a woman-serpent of Aztec mythology.<sup>(13)</sup>

In his varied readings it is certain that Malraux also came across the African use of the serpent, principal divinity of Guinea and Cayenne, explored by Father Labat.<sup>(14)</sup> (Let us not forget the use of the serpent-Cable in Lunes, or even the traditional Biblical role of the serpent as the Devil's agent.) Treble Clef is an erotic obsession of the Fireman; if you explain Treble

Clef in terms of Freudian psychology, "she" will represent symbolically a male sexual organ, and the male-female Treble Clef and her rapport with the Fireman is none too clear. One thinks of Ferral, a character of La Condition Humaine, and his desire for self-possession. In one's attempt at self-realization through another, one usually destroys the agent which makes the narcissism possible. Eventually, one also destroys oneself. As we know, the Fireman's victory is far from total, since the people whom he assists do not delight in what he achieves. His act is as meaningless as the murder of Death in Lunes. (Of interest, the representative of evil on earth is again a female character.) It simply indicates that Malraux must go even further in his search for a way to combat the absurd.

Another possible interpretation of Bhouzylle is that it is the Bondy of Malraux's youth: boring, empty, and grey. Robert Payne provided me with this initial thought;<sup>(15)</sup> the game of "massacre" could be young André's imagination at work, or the fields of World War I. Naturally, the images created by Malraux are equally as horrific as the image of a young man (Malraux) holding a cinder-covered sandwich on a battleground of rotting bodies, or as that of an eight year old witness to a hatchet death. (One just wonders where the abundance and variety of images originated, if these two incidents were the sole survivors of a post "belle époque" youth.) The Fireman's victory is worthless; Treble Clef is dead, but anarchy reigns in Bhouzylle. The concept which was lacking is the same concept missing all the way through the novels, until the last one - the concept of regeneration. Action and vio-

lence without rebirth and fundamental man is void of any meaning.

#### IV

The last of the Malraux fantasies is Royaume farfelu published in 1928. Royaume farfelu is a "fantastic tale of strangely violent men;"<sup>(16)</sup> their violence terminates in death. However, their death parallels the void of the desert before them - they have merely replaced the absurd of life with the abyss of death. Malraux's "hantise du mal" had not abated; his obsession with death and the irreparable still thrived:

Royaume farfelu emphasizes sharply that Malraux's vision antecedes his career as 'man of action.' The cosmic ring, the pessimism, the exoticism, the violence, the insects, the image of blindness, the suffering, and the immanence of death: all are already present. And the story itself - oddly foreshadowing Vincent Berger's Eastern adventure in Les Noyers de l'Altenburg - shows that Malraux's basic fable of arduous adventure and defeat is already in place. (17)

Malraux was twenty-seven when he chose to stop his "farfelu" works; in the same year, he published his first novel. He had, by this time, digested his Indochina experience. He even seemed to make an effort to survive in his world by working at a regular job. This period of five years or so was to be a dormant period, for the Malraux seeker of adventure and future revolutionary, was quietly and slowly budding.

Between the years 1926 and 1928, Malraux renewed his interests in art, literature and the movies. He was still moved by the fantastic, but he was beginning to realize that only an

involvement with possible, concrete acts against death and the the absurd would matter, only through them could man attain tragic heights; a violent outright attack against death seemed foolish, and always ended in death - a real conquest for the absurd! He never really completely renounced fantasy for he felt that such expression of imagination was the true domaine of a creative artist.

Royaume farfelu was conceived as far back as 1920; its "embryo," "Voyages aux îles Fortunées," was published in 1927. In 1925, Malraux had published (under a pseudonym, while in Indochina), "Expédition d'Ispahan." Both would eventually become the Royaume farfelu of 1928. The theme of "Expédition" involved a combat led by a group of men against a far off but powerful enemy; again, Malraux returns the hero-father of his last novel to such a place of combat. Night, the death of animals, the presence of scorpions, silence, the desert, all add up to the powerful, understated presence of a hostile nature and destiny. Destiny triumphs in "Expédition," before the cossack regiment has a chance to clearly identify its illusive enemy.

This was Malraux's first work of fiction to attempt to deal with actuality. In truth, there had been a Soviet effort at expansion in Iran. This expansion was primarily directed against the British. The Persian government was caught between these dual pressures. The government finally pursued a policy of firmness with regard to both countries. The real facts Malraux used were the cossack march on the city, and the defeat of the regiment. He had done much reading on the area: Supplement to the Voyages

of Marco Polo, by Arnoux, The Thousand and One Nights, and Go-bineau's Three Years in Central Asia, which describes a scorpion infested plain near Ispahan. (Let us remember that neither Lunes nor Ecrit had occurred in "real" locations. The area of and around Persia was to so intrigue Malraux that he would make three trips to it in the early 1930's, and locate a large portion of one of his novels in the aforementioned area.)

In his "Expédition," atmosphere replaces fantasy. The desert becomes the malevolent realm of silence and death. The absurd is still the prime character; this time, it is not represented by a skeleton or a beastly, grotesque animal - it is the void of the desert, and the very real scorpion army. "Expédition" begins to bridge the gap between the "farfelu" pieces and the novels by taking place in an actual, geographic area, and by having the absurd shape up as a genuine enemy, a natural enemy.

In "Voyages aux Îles Fortunées," the chief personage of "Expédition" is replaced by two witness characters: Idekel, an historiographer, and a narrator. The characters are no longer drawn from fantasy; they are human. The story itself has no real ending; it promises of something to come. In 1928, the story was revised, combined with "Expédition," and Royaume farfelu was the result. Malraux's inspirations included Saint John-Perse and Victor Segalen, two contemporary poets who were least in accord with their time; the Bible, from which came Idekel, a transposition of the name of one of the rivers which exited from Eden; G. Schlumberger's l'Épopée Byzantine à la fin du xe siècle; and other

works on Asian history by Jean du-Plan Carpin, R. Grousset, and Cte. d'Hérisson.

Royaume farfelu is an "histoire" or a "fable." Its major theme is the vanity of the universe, no less or no more than the theme of Lunes. In Lunes, the kingdom of death was known also as "royaume farfelu;" in Lunes, it was the kingdom of vacuity, the strange, and death. In Royaume farfelu, the kingdom takes on more frightening proportions: it is unintelligible, unfathomable, representative of failure and terrifying destruction. Royaume marks the "royalty" of destiny, but like the previous "farfelu" works, Royaume can only attack destiny with a verbal irony. This is why Malraux converted his writings into novels, even though remaining in sympathy with the creative imagination of the fantasies: only via the novel could he create real heroes to combat the absurd by their "gestes," thereby ravishing total victory from the absurd.

Malraux's first two novels begin aboard ship; it is interesting that Royaume also begins in the same manner. A boat approaches a coast off the Indies in the moonlight. Again, we begin our adventure in the dark. The city viewed from the boat seems strange and savage. The people are Turkish. (Malraux was awed by the barbaric acts of the Turks; he had read of T. E. Lawrence's experiences with them. He later created Vincent Berger, a semi-Lawrence character, who fought the Turkish cause.)

The passengers on the boat disembark, and are greeted by merchants, one of whom sells the mythological phoenix; we see it burn, and be reborn from its ashes. Certain references are

still fanciful in origin. The passengers are imprisoned. The narrator, who is one of the prisoners, is called to meet the Prince of the country, known as le Petit Mogol. (In Lunes, our characters were all fantasies; in Ecrit, we had a combination of the fantastic and the real, creatures and beings; Royaume is filled entirely with people.) Le Petit Mogol's campaigns are not going well: Prince les sorciers de l'archipel connaissent la sèche odeur du feu de l'enfer où pleurent tes sujets, ses défilés que fouettent les éclats des brasiers d'herbes [..] Cigognes, de lourds démons traversent la fumée rousse criblée de damnés qui tombent comme des bêtes mortes." (RF: 321) Demons and fire still run through the Malraucian imagery of Royaume.

We learn that Idekel, assistant to le Petit Mogol, has led the Prince's daughter to the Tsar Eater-of-Fish. The Tsar's people are cannibals. "Les chefs tributaires apportaient sur des crocs des morceaux de chair qui saignaient." (RF: 322) The image of bleeding flesh was a predominant one in the beginning of Lunes; it is still around some seven years later. The Tsar's people also punish their enemies in unique ways: "J'ai entendu le chant de guerre d'un chef sauvage prisonnier plongé dans la cuve aux serpents et qui mourait, brandissant en chantant ses mains pleines de vipères." (RF: 322) The serpents are again present, and the scene recalls the "eye for an eye" shooting by Lawrence of the Arab in the pit. It also brings to mind Nietzsche's experience in the tunnel, where man is successful in securing victory over the absurd via any means possible, even at the expense of his life.

The narrator becomes historiographer of the Prince. He goes with the Prince's army to conquer Ispahan. Idekel goes along;

he speaks of his previous experiences:

J'étais mage. Je suis allé aux îles de l'enfer. J'ai vu les jeunes démons. J'ai vu les damnés. Des légions de démons s'enfuirent. Ils nous vainquirent. Je ne pus sortir un seul matin sans trouver des mages illustres pendus... (RF: 326)

Hanging is a form of violence already previously mentioned twice: in Lunes, the cat hangs himself; in Ecrit, the criminals are hanged. Hanging might have possibly become an obsession of Malraux's because it was one of the fashionable forms of suicide in vogue. Idekel remembers his first taking of Ispahan, and his contact with the demon conquerors: "Nous primes le palais d'Ispahan à quatre heures, après avoir égorgé un grand nombre de soldats persans." (RF: 326) He also recalls the splendid fire at Ispahan. Here we have real characters committing acts of genuine violence against other authentic characters. Idekel is perhaps related to the Fireman of the earlier fantasies; he so greatly rejoices in watching flames. He speaks of the Byzantine Emperor Basil II, a most unpleasant monarch who rendered his Bulgarian prisoners blind, and sent them marching across the desert. The effect is that of an omen for the new expedition about to begin: "L'empereur Basile II fit aveugler les innombrables combattants bulgares qu'il avait faits prisonniers. Il les rangea par files de dix. Il leur donna pour guide un onzième prisonnier auquel il ne fit arracher qu'un seul oeil." (RF: 329) The torture of blinding is a new preoccupation; other Malraucian characters will blind themselves to prove a point, will have their eyelids removed, or will lose their sight in accidents or in war. One other Malraucian character of the novels will even suffer this same vision of the "Emperor-bourreau."

Idekel predicts disaster; the army finally gets under way; but it lacks provisions and equipment. The men arrive at Ispahan, but the city appears deserted. It resembles a labyrinth making fast penetration an impossibility. Night arrives, the time of evil. Scorpions attack the horses, and kill the men as well. "La nuit revint, avec son cortège de constellations et de scorpions noirs; de nouveau, des soldats moururent." (RF: 332) Night is the perfect setting for the death of man; he is so vulnerable to physical and metaphysical anguish. The men become indifferent to life. The narrator is taken over by a talkative demon. "Tu te souviens[. . .] où quelques têtes coupées achèvent de saigner au centre d'une place torride..." (RF: 333) Evidently, the demon enjoyed the blood and gore of which he spoke; the men, however, are as indifferent as the people of Bhouzylle to what was going on around them. The demon's preoccupation is a favored obsession of the author: beheading and blood. Finally, half the army has been destroyed by scorpions, agents of death; the other half flee to the desert, where they will surely die. The narrator manages to escape certain death, however; he reaches another kingdom, where he establishes residence and takes to selling shells.

How vain is man's existence, and how frail is his life before all the circumstances which can steal it away. Idekel predicts correctly for man cannot be twice victorious over destiny; destiny finishes all the characters of Royaume except for the narrator, in a way similar to Moby Dick's annihilating all but Ishmael. Not only is death overwhelmingly the victor in Royaume,

but it is also successful in toning down the narrator's triumph: his contentment with selling shells is practically a direct repetition of the anticlimax in Lunes, where the personages cannot recall why they do away with death, or the emptiness of the reaction of the people of Bhouzylle when the serpent monster is killed in Ecrit. Violence does lead to indifference or contempt for violence, for it actually gains nothing in man's quest against the absurd, interesting lesson for the author to learn so early in his literary career.

\* \* \* \* \*

In any case, violence is a definite feature of Malraux's works. It germinates as metaphysical thought in the early essays, develops into visual, nightmarish obsessions in the "farfelu" writings, and finally materializes into acceptable, recognizable social forms in the novels.

Combat and conquest take hold of all the Malraucian characters, even those of these fantasy writings. These characters are the products of an imagination run rampant, exposed to the nightmarish trauma of an anguished soul, searching desperately for answers to man's condition. Each character tests his will in face of Destiny, and its agents Evil, Death, etc. The sins of Lunes hunt Death and kill it, but forget to destroy Satan, leaving Evil free to roam. Malraux was quite a seer, considering that in 1921 he anticipated the omnipresence and omnipotence of Evil. Bleeding hearts, serpents, transforming and surreal objects are

the manifestations of an obsession with horrible and strange monsters, symbols of the unknown terrors which the absurd and the abyss promise, and which must be suppressed. All the characters of the fantasies wander in the dark for that is where Malraux's soul is lost; Evil pervades the forests, the deserts, and wherever else his characters seek their adventures. Fire makes its appearance in the fantasies, and stays with Malraux as an obsession, until he witnesses it as a genuine disaster in the combat in which he participates, when it takes on real proportions, and reduces to an integral part of the human tragedy. Each of the fantasy characters notices all is not right with the world; they want to correct the situation, but know not how, and generally experience a void after attempts at rectification. The weird imagery represents the fears of the author who as a naïve young man, was incapable of quieting his dread, dissatisfied at his inability to rid himself of the absurd. Several of the early characters die hideous deaths, being pierced by needles, taking acid baths, victims of scorpions, etc. The dread of death and dying violently was everywhere, but at this point, Malraux could not combat it; about all he could do, was relate the haunting presence of doom in his writings.

With the last of the "farfelu" works, came a reorientation on the part of the author, away from fantasy, towards the real (both in terms of adventures and personages). Royaume farfelu depicts an authentic place and human characters which are necessary to the proper attack against the absurd. Violence is still prevalent, and a new obsession, that of blinding, appears.

It becomes evident that the only successful contest with the absurd may be entered into with genuine heroes through their violent deeds. Fantasy characters act, but fail to relieve the disquietude which gnaws away at the human soul. Their motivation is too readily forgotten, and they cannot hope to solve the enigmas which perplex man. Malraux exits from the world of verbal battle, and joins the sphere of the gesture.

The conclusion is clear: the only option open to the author is to place man in a situation in which his strikes against death and destiny will at least open wounds. Man in the Malraucian novels will take on tragic proportions because through his actions and his violence, he will attempt to deal the absurd a severe and meaningful blow. He will no longer be a prisoner of his words. It was shortly after this time that Malraux again plunged into violent action of his own to test out his theory that this was the only way to possibly combat if not conquer the absurd.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>R. W. B. Lewis, Malraux: A Collection of Critical Essays, p.2.
- <sup>2</sup>Geoffrey H. Hartmann, André Malraux: the Return from Hell, p.15.
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.28: "The bloodiness, violence and torture which he evokes are clearly extreme interrogations which Man inflicts on himself to sustain the idea of Man. Whatever the apparent cause, it is still he who puts himself on the wrack."
- <sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp.29, 30, 37.
- <sup>6</sup>Robert Payne, A Portrait of André Malraux, p.125.
- <sup>7</sup>Ch.-F. Roedig, "The Early Fascinations of Malraux," American Society Legion of Honor Magazine, XXIX, No. 1, 1958, p.23.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p.26.
- <sup>9</sup>André Vandegans, La jeunesse littéraire d'André Malraux: Essai sur l'inspiration farfelue, p.12.
- <sup>10</sup>Robert Payne, op. cit., p.29.
- <sup>11</sup>André Vandegans, op. cit., p.104.
- <sup>12</sup>Lucien Goldmann, Pour une sociologie du roman, cf. section dealing with Lunes.
- <sup>13</sup>André Vandegans, op. cit., p.190.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p.191. Vandegans refers to Malraux's knowledge of P. Labat and his work les Voyages aux îles de l'Amérique, as communicated to him by Pascal Pia. Labat, according to Vandegans, is a figure "who could have seduced Malraux," whose work was full of colorful descriptions and reminiscences of the West Indies in the eighteenth century.

<sup>15</sup>Robert Payne, op. cit., pp.53-57.

<sup>16</sup>W. M. Frohock, André Malraux and the Tragic Imagination,

p.26: these violent men "die in an adventure of which death is the only possible reward; their death is perilously close to having no meaning."

<sup>17</sup>Cecil Jenkins, André Malraux, p.31.

## CHAPTER II

### VIOLENCE AND THE INDIVIDUAL'S DEFIANCE OF HIS HUMAN CONDITION

- I. The asocial hero and his solitary action against the absurd: Les Conquérants
- II. Fraternal stirrings: two men seek to "scar the map":  
La Voie Royale

"L'aventure n'est pour les premiers héros de Malraux que l'expression d'une passion plus profonde que les autres, une passion pour laquelle les objets à conquérir ne sont rien. Une passion parfaitement désespérée. Ces héros sont des malades, en tout cas des hommes qui n'ont pas trouvé leur équilibre humain, incapables de construire, bons seulement à combattre la société qu'ils haïssent. Ils n'ont pas de carrière à accomplir, pas de biens à défendre, pas de famille à fonder; ni l'argent ni la vanité n'ont sur eux de prise; ils ne traînent pas de passé, ils n'espèrent point d'avenir, ils n'ont pas de conquêtes à réaliser: seulement une mort à accomplir." (1)

Malraux's first heroes are asocial: intense energy courses through them, often without direction, rendering them malcontent with themselves, and with the world as it is. To prove to themselves that they exist, they act violently in manners which can often be defined as bizarre - i.e. Perken's succoring a village as he lays dying (La Voie Royale), Garine's shooting of the double agent just before he leaves for England (Les Conquérants). They act thus to shock the world, to defy the absurd, to overcome the feeling of humiliation in the face of the irremediable. The first heroes think of their own salvation, how they as individuals can escape the abyss. Their thoughts, for the most part, do not encompass humanity, and they act alone. They rebel against tradition and convention for these are tools of the absurd, which present man to death. The major goal of these activists is to challenge destiny; if they must use violence or murder, they do so in order to experience their "volonté de puissance," their only alternative to the tragedy of fate.

## I

The first novel to appear was Les Conquérants. The characters of Les Conquérants and of the remaining novels seek action and adventure as did those of Malraux's earlier writings; they encounter violence as well. However, most of the heroes of the novels have reasons for their actions, ways to justify the violence in which they are involved, be their reasons selfish

(as in the earlier novels), or humanitarian in nature. (The heroes of the fiction fantasy pieces were often ignorant of what motivated them, and their deeds, therefore, became insignificant.)

The Conquerors literally drips with blood. Murder is an accepted political technique. The book is full of relentless men who without a qualm send other men to death by the knife, by the bullet, and by cyanide. They are also men who have risked death themselves and undergone torture. (2)

There is no other novel by Malraux so full of murder. The corpses litter the pages; the executioners are on the rampage; and though we rarely see the killings we are aware of an atmosphere of sullen, erratic violence. (3)

As soon as he separated himself from the "farfelu kingdom," Malraux plunged avidly into the world of the real and violent gesture. He turned his nightmares into clear visions of murder, torture, and death, so as to rid himself of their haunting and hallucinatory effect. By facing up to the violence coldly and rationally, he could then apply himself to eradicating those causes which push man to intense action, and which demand of man that he test his "volonté de puissance."

The conquerors are several characters who deal with death and violence in their own individual way. The emphasis throughout, by Malraux's own avowal, is based on the relationship between the individual and collective action. Contrary to his previous works, Malraux no longer has his characters escape into an imaginary or semi-erie world; the heroes of his novels elect to create new authentic worlds where relationships take on new significance. The first character introduced is really a personifi-

cation - it is the province of Canton with its "ambiance" of unrest, both political and social. Fighting occurs in the streets, sabotage and boycotting by the Chinese workers of Hong Kong against the sale of British goods, all of this creates an atmosphere filled with tension and malaise. Mingled with the province, is a host of alien personages, characters whose Western origins do not aid in appeasing the crises of the Orient. On the contrary, they have arrived in China bringing with them their Western philosophic orientation towards individualism, with its search for efficacious solutions to combat the absurd, and its correlative, the anguish engendered by the knowledge of the futility of man's efforts to triumph over his opponent, the absurd. These alien characters are responsible for the disruption of the serenity of the Eastern world, which prior to the arrival of the British, knew only to propagate internal calm. The Chinese situation which Malraux chose to report is, of course, parallel to the one he observed existing in Indochina in the 1920's, when the French were the oppressive rulers of the Annamites. Again, it was because of the impetus of many foreigners, Malraux included, that any action at all was taken against the French, although not very successfully.

Much of the Chinese population, particularly the young, are ready to absorb the ideas brought by their foreign "emancipators." Ling has already explained this to A. D. in La Tentation de l'Occident. Gérard, the special envoy of the Kuomintang in Indochina, explains to Garine, the protagonist of the novel and the director of Propaganda in Canton, the condition of readi-

ness and awareness of the Chinese: "Vous savez que la Chine ne connaissait pas les idées qui tendent à l'action; et elles la saisissent comme l'idée d'égalité saisissait en France les hommes de 89; comme une proie." (C: 19) The East has been successfully invaded by the West. Men such as Gérard, Garine and others are to bear witness to the inevitable decline of serenity in a world where abject poverty is now prevalent; their role is that of catalyst to a revolutionary action for the human rights and dignity of all the oppressed Chinese peoples. They are to awaken in the Chinese the desire for individual "puissance," to discard the yoke of humiliation which is bowing them; at the same time, Gérard, Garine and the others will fight their own battle with the absurd, discovering dignity for themselves.

One of the delegates of the Kuomintang, Klein, another Westerner, organizes the strike at Hong Kong, to block the entry of ships to the port, cutting off the British of the colony from their enormously profitable trade. Klein practices, along with others, a form of non-violent protest advocated by Sorel. Klein has previously been in prison, and is one of those who has learned that as an individual he can never allow such humiliation to occur again, even if the alternative is his own death. He knows himself to be apart: "Le condamné, l'épileptique, le syphilitique, le mutilé; pas comme les autres. Ceux qui ne peuvent pas accepter." (C: 53) His resolution is to serve the Chinese Revolution, and, in so doing, rediscover his own human dignity. He had once tried to commit suicide, but he discovered that you

could not succeed if you stopped to think about it, or if you attempted it in the day time. He had even forgotten his motives. Klein is engulfed by the mood of violence in Canton. He dies in a most contemptible manner; he is the victim of torture and death. Klein is never able to attain human dignity; in fact, he is a negative symbol of three notions which remove all sense of worth from man and deliver him directly to the absurd: prison, torture, and death.

Another "raté," Nicolaïeff, the police commissioner of Russian origin, had been previously affiliated with terrorist organizations back in Russia. However, circumstances were such that his fellow workers no longer had confidence in him. He found himself out of work. The Revolution in his homeland freed him; he finally arrived in Canton, with a strong love for his police work. Just prior to leaving Russia, he had denounced his neighbor, an old woman who was hiding arms. He became commissioner of the secret police in Canton, some four years later. He enjoys his work, particularly his interrogations. Nicolaïeff will be the prototype of the inquisitors to follow: men who arrive in life by destroying the lives of others, whose only thrill is derived from experiencing the humiliation of another human being. Nicolaïeff cannot conceive of a man withstanding interrogation; to him, all men lack courage, for he himself has never been able to exhibit any. He enjoys being on the side of the executioner, as do all cowards, who are by nature, afraid of committing themselves to any real action, for fear of bodily harm, taking a stand, or simply living. He is a false "conqueror," existing on self-deception.

Although on the same side as Klein, Hong is a member of a splinter group. Hong is the leader of the terrorist movement. He is a young Chinese, born in poverty, who has quickly tired of the Eastern philosophy of contentment, knowing full well that it is most difficult to be happy while starving. His manner of protest is through anarchistic acts involving total destruction, terror, and annihilation of the world which is responsible for his condition. Hong is reminiscent of the literary and artistic world of the Dadaists, who refused to accept the First World War and society's decadence as the natural course of events; Hong too refuses to live any longer in the humiliating circumstances which mark his life and the lives of his fellow Chinese. His goals help him to become educated, although not in the traditional sense. Being educated while remaining poor, separates Hong from the masses. He pursues his radical thoughts and violent tendencies alone. He becomes a fanatic who lives for suffering, and grows strong on hate. His definition of death is "souffrir à l'extrême d'une blessure très grave." (C: 35) He is in search of a justification for his existence. His enemies are not so much the British as the old guard Chinese, who will support any form of dictatorship as long as it promises to protect the status quo of the East. Hong is secretary to Garine, and Garine is sympathetic to Hong: Hong embraces violence; he is unafraid to commit himself to action, at a time when Garine himself finds even moral decisions difficult. Hong is, as Lucien Goldmann terms it, "le moraliste de la violence et de l'assassinat terroriste."<sup>(4)</sup>

Hong helps instill in the Chinese a sense of being, a way for the Chinese to be a part of the Revolution awakening all of China to the fact that if man is to die, he has to attempt to attain for himself as a poor individual worker, that which he thought belonged solely to the rich as a class: his liberty and his dignity as a man. "En même temps que la terreur d'une mort sans signification, d'une mort qui ne rachète ni ne récompense, naît l'idée de la possibilité pour chaque homme, de vaincre la vie collective des malheureux, de parvenir à cette vie particulière individuelle, qu'ils tiennent confusément pour le bien le plus précieux des riches." (C: 112) Eastern man became freer to act as he renounced his religious beliefs which had impeded him from acting. The terrorist group grew as it had grown in reality in Indochina, because violent activity was the only way repressed groups knew how to respond after being crushed for a long period of time.

Hong strikes at society in the only fashion he knows: he assassinates a judge, two magistrates, and a rich merchant, not because they are wealthy, but because they have been the only people to enjoy self-respect and dignity in his culture. "C'est son dégoût de la respectabilité, vertu chinoise par excellence, qui l'a conduit dans les rangs des révolutionnaires." (C: 144) When informed of the assassination of several leading bourgeois, Garine knows that it is Hong who has chosen this violent means of taking from the rich that which the poor have never had: a concept of self-esteem. "Le banquier Sia-Tcheou est mort...-Couteau? -Une balle dans la tête...-Et tu penses que

Hong? -Je ne pense pas: je sais." (C: 139) Hong is bitter, for he has discovered that many of the Chinese, like Tcheng-Dai, and the banker Sia-Tcheou are willing to pay to have things go on as they have always been. He feels that the only just punishment for them is torture, for the life of a poor Chinese has been one long martyrdom:

La torture - moi je pense - est, là, une chose juste. Parce que la vie d'un homme de la misère est une torture longue. Et ceux qui enseignent aux hommes de la misère à supporter cela doivent être punis, prêtres chrétiens ou autres hommes. Ils ne savent pas. Il faudrait les obliger à comprendre. Ne pas lâcher sur eux les soldats. Non. Les lépreux. Le bras d'un homme se transforme en boue, et coule... (C: 140)

He hates Tcheng-Dai and the others for they are idealists seeking to arrange things: Hong wants nothing arranged. He needs nothing less than total metamorphosis.

The revolutionaries of Canton are not alone; the blood of the Chinese of Shanghai was signed to a roll of silk to show support of those of Canton: "Nous avons signé ceci de notre sang après avoir tranché chacun l'un de nos doigts, pour témoigner notre admiration à nos compatriotes cantonnais qui osent ainsi lutter, d'une manière très admirable, contre l'Angleterre impérialiste." (C: 141) The flow of blood seems to initiate the Chinese to the world of violence, and can only show support of Hong's way of attacking the problem.

Hong knows no other way. "Seule, l'action au service de la haine n'est ni mensonge, ni lâcheté, ni faiblesse." (C: 146) He does not wish to forget his hatred; it alone propels him. In a sense, he is not unlike Borodine, the ardent Bolshevik, in that

he serves his own cause unquestioningly, "blindly." Words such as "compromise" and "moderation" are words which Hong cannot understand. As an anarchist, he can only see to obliterate; he does not think of possible consequences, or how to ameliorate conditions once everything he loathes has been overthrown. For this reason, he is a lone conqueror. His violence will render him useless to the International; he obliges the Revolution to move faster than Russia would like. His defense is that when violence is needed, it is eventually used anyway; he is simply cutting out unnecessary waiting. "En France, on n'osait pas couper la tête du roi, hein? On l'a fait, à la fin. Et la France n'est pas morte. Il faut commencer par guillotiner le roi, toujours. Faire tuer par de pauvres bougres les ennemis du parti, cela est bien." (C: 147,8)

Hong carries the assassination of the Revolution's enemies too far; he tortures and kills non-terrorist agents of the Revolution. He is a purist, and feels responsible for purging the Revolution of those who are not totally married to it. He is arrested; because he has resisted, he is beaten. He is to be judged for the torture and murder of three hostages, one of them being Klein. Hong is executed, caught up in the mechanism of the Revolution. His efforts are all futile, the acts of a solitary figure in revolt, with no constructive goal or purpose.

One of the problems that the Chinese Revolutionary effort faced was dissension amongst the Chinese people themselves. The young people were drunk on the Western philosophies of Revolution and change; the older Chinese, led by Tcheng-Dai, had become

myths, figures similar to Gandhi. They escaped from the violence they knew was necessary to gain their people's dignity and liberty, for they knew that the old order Eastern philosophy would be destroyed by the advent of the Revolution. They believed that there would be no place in the new people's republic for them. As many other old mandarins, Tcheng-Dai chose to ignore the hurt he could do the Revolution: "Il ne veut pas savoir. Il ne veut pas engager sa responsabilité morale." (C: 95) Tcheng-Dai fled from violence as he had fled from all direct confrontation with life, destiny and death.

It is within the power of Tcheng-Dai to arrange an effective strike. He refuses to sign the decree needed to prevent ships from entering the port of Hong Kong, for he knows that he will need the British, and cannot turn against them. The British will permit Tcheng-Dai to rule Canton as a puppet ruler; this is all that Tcheng-Dai desires for he has to save face and protect old China at any cost. He escapes not only the potential violence of the situation, but substitutes his own static world for a reality desperately in need of change. Tcheng-Dai knowingly weakens the Chinese effort, for reasons he claims are on behalf of his people: "J'aime à lire des contes tragiques, et je sais les admirer; je n'aime pas à en contempler le spectacle dans ma propre famille." (C: 108,9) He believes that supporting the boycott and attacking the British will maintain the fanaticism brought to China by the aliens, and supported by the young Chinese; it will mean the eventual demise of everything Chinese - philosophy, culture, and traditions included. Tcheng-Dai states

that the Chinese can win without violent measures; but what Tcheng-Dai hopes to gain is not a victory intended for all the Chinese, a way for them to attain the self-respect preached by their doctrines and yet, always denied them. Tcheng-Dai is denying China its very existence, by demanding that it stay just as it is; he would rather not see China emerge at all if it were to mean that all that China represented for some thousands of years had to submerge into the past. Tcheng-Dai is a "conqueror," but a very selfish one. He refuses to admit that he could be in error, and is willing to escape change by allowing himself to die violently, a tremendous irony, knowing how he feels about violence.

Tcheng-Dai is found stabbed. At first, it is not known whether it was suicide or homicide.<sup>(5)</sup> One of the terrorists had killed Tcheng-Dai; however, Tcheng-Dai left a suicide note. Tcheng-Dai had hoped that his "suicide" would be blamed on the terrorists; instead, his death was labeled an assassination by enemy agents. He had hoped his "suicide" would stop the anarchy; instead, more violence was to occur, more support was to be given to the terrorists. The violent death of Tcheng-Dai does not occur before our eyes; in this respect, Malraux emulates the great writers of ancient tragedy.

Tcheng-Dai is paraded in effigy through the streets of Canton. The supreme irony is that he is not represented as the personification of Eastern serenity, but "Tcheng-Dai y est figuré, mort, au-dessous d'un soldat anglais qui le perce d'une baïonnette."  
(C: 180)

Borodine represents still another branch of participation in the Chinese Revolution; his is the side of expediency, as far apart in motivation and goal from Hong as he is from Tcheng-Dai. Borodine is a character of foreign birth. He is a professional revolutionary Bolshevik by nature, in China by order of the Communist Party. He is a man of action, preoccupied by the real, governed completely by Communist Party politics, and therefore, not a character modeled after Malraux. (Borodin" did exist in Communist history; it seems that he received his education abroad, left Russia before its travails, and returned after the Revolution, proclaiming his support of it "after the fact.") Borodine is "un grand homme d'affaires," not faced by the problems of decision, for the Party removes this burden from him, solution which could never have been accepted by Malraux. Borodine's surrogate "God" is the Communist Party, leaving Borodine anguish-free, acting strictly on the Party's commandments, without thinking of the monumental problems of death and the absurd, thus removing the frustrations which lead to violence.

Borodine's practical mind analyzes the Revolution in its costs to the International. "La révolution, c'est payer l'armée." (C: 147) For Borodine, the Revolution needs slowing down, and compromise. If the International decided that the Revolution was impractical at a given moment, it would deem it necessary to postpone it until conditions were better suited to a Communist victory. This is fine for the International, and for the foreigners who have no real vested interest in China; however, Borodine will, of course, have difficulty with the terrorist wing of the Revolu-

tion, with the "stop" and "go" decided by outsiders. Borodine and the International represent a group of conquerors who also lack proper humanitarian goals. They are not really interested in improving the immediate situation of the Chinese; they are merely interested in establishing another Communist stronghold by ousting the British from China.

Borodine realizes the importance of removing the terrorists from the field of action. They are killing the Chinese élite, and any support this group might throw the way of the Kuomintang (Chinese branch of the International), after the British are forced to withdraw. He discovers that the terrorists are even taking as hostage other members of the Revolutionary effort, non-terrorists, torturing them and killing them: "... avant-hier, trois de nos agents, découverts, ont été étranglés après avoir été torturés pendant plus d'une heure." (C: 184) Borodine needs to suppress the terrorists who are undermining the Revolution, and so, Hong is executed, even though Garine feels he is recuperative.

Borodine's framework for Communism does not have room for men of Garine's nature: emotional, sensitive, and undisciplined.<sup>(6)</sup> Borodine is defined as a "Roman" Communist, one of "ceux qui défendent à Moscou les acquisitions de la Révolution." (C: 211) He is part of the Revolution, and knows how to submit himself to its modifications, i.e. compromise. Borodine engages in violence when the International declares it necessary, and condones it only when it serves the goals of the Communist Party.

Malraux's Garine is the man of frustration that his counterpart Borodine is not. Garine is a man of action, born of a rupture with the world that he has inherited; he is a "dé-raciné." Garine is "capable" of action, not always certain how to orient himself, not unlike many lost young men of the author's generation, in fact, very much like young Malraux. Garine seeks the meaning of his life. He is an adventurer for whom China is one scene of action as could be any place in the world disturbed by insurgence and unrest. Garine's background proves to be the most interesting, paralleling the author's life in several ways, and leading to the creation of the militant anarchist into which Garine develops. Garine's mixed background, his involvement in an affair involving abortions, leads to his being condemned as an accomplice, and his own judging of the judiciary system absurd. At twenty, he had sought "un temps de trouble." (C: 57) His intensity of being was thwarted by the civilization which judged him criminal. He was obliged to alienate himself from his society, and seek the adventures of his life elsewhere. (Malraux too became disillusioned with his own society, particularly in its condemnation of him during his trial.) Garine's clear will which was beginning to dominate him turned into "ce même sentiment d'impuissance navrante, de mépris et de dégoût que l'on éprouve devant une multitude fanatique, devant toutes les grandes manifestations de l'absurdité humaine." (C: 61) Those conquests which were awaiting him, those acts he had yet to perform, all those hopes for intense excitement and violent participation in life were dashed at his grotesque trial, where the judges were so busy judging him that they neglected to understand him. All

of his wishes, which involved defying death itself, (for he was aware of the limitations death placed on human activity), were to be buried alive with him in a prison cell for six months. Fortunately, his sentence was suspended, as it was in the case of young André; however, the damage had been done. Garine declared himself asocial; he removed himself from Swiss society, and joined the Foreign Legion. This too did not hold Garine for long, for again he was deceived. "De la guerre, il attendait des combats: il y trouva l'immobilité de millions d'hommes passifs dans le vacarme." (C: 63) Surely Garine had the right to expect the violence he anticipated, the violence he needed to prove to himself that his will was at least attempting to combat destiny.

He then committed financial suicide by speculating on stocks. This happened to Malraux as well. His loss of money could be interpreted as his desire to free himself from all material ties with the world, so that he might be available to transfer himself anywhere in the world, and live from his adventures alone. Garine then directed a house of publications; this could correspond to the period of quietude commencing for the author in 1928, when he undertook a similar occupation. Garine discovered he had a penchant for the supporters of the Russian Revolution - they acted, and did not simply preach. However, he refused to commit himself entirely to the Communist cause, rejecting Party membership and its rigid discipline, as had done Malraux. Instead, Garine went to Russia, and was sorely disillusioned again. The Revolution had not gone quite far enough for Garine: the world was not scarred sufficiently. He wanted more: "Pour un assassin, il

n'y a pas de crimes, il n'y a que les meurtres." (C: 68)

Finally, the International sent him to Canton in 1918. After all, he was really a dangerous man to have around. He would not obey Party orders; he was too individualistic. Garine is now in Canton, not because he loves the Chinese, but because he identifies with them as people oppressed by a government in control: in the case of the Chinese, it was the British rule which Garine automatically detested, and would try to overthrow. At this point, Garine is best characterized by a contradiction: he abhors the British conquerors for the abject conditions they force on the Chinese population, and yet, he aspires to be a conqueror, for life has meaning only for those who exert their will in open defiance of death.

Sun-Yat-Sen hires Garine because of his strong will. Shortly after his taking charge of Propaganda, Garine gains control of the police as well.<sup>(7)</sup> Garine obtains money and power fast, but not always legitimately. Again, one recalls the Banteay-Srei expedition, and one wonders whether this admission in reference to Garine clarifies the true nature of Malraux's original purpose in Indochina.

Garine is an amoral, anguished outcast of society, pursuing his way in a world ruled over and judged by moral conventional types. Garine is aware of the importance of living his life intensely; the men around him, from whom he has deliberately separated himself, are going "through the motions." Their lives are insignificant because they accept death without a struggle, and they refuse to see man's condition as absurd. However, the

irony of the situation is that Garine is very ill; he will most certainly die in the near future. He will be forced to leave Canton, province of vitality. He will be doomed to witness his own slow death, unthinkable agony for a man of his intensity; he will watch himself succumb to the absurd.

However, before he leaves, he tries to save the Chinese insurrection. The British had hired the services of a Chinese General Tang who marched against the Revolution. When Garine is told of Tang's advance, and the capture of several patrols, he has the prisoners he has taken, executed. Houses are set afire: "...on pille et on brûle." (C: 125) Garine forgets about dying as he engages himself in real and violent activity, as he arms his cadets with ammunition to oppose Tang's troops.

Garine and Tcheng-Dai are clearly contrasted in the following quote: "Que l'enfant doit-il préférer, de la nourrice qui l'aime et le laisse se noyer, ou de celle qui ne l'aime pas, mais sait pager et le sauve?" (C: 136) Garine believes he does not feel anything for the Chinese people he assists; however, it is not possible to join oneself to a cause for four or more years without developing some compassion for those who receive your help. Tcheng-Dai, in effect, despite his so-called love for the Chinese, is willing to permit his "family" to "drown." Garine has given of himself to the Chinese people; he has gained some self-respect, and the feeling of challenging the absurd. He can be termed the least egotistical of the "conquerors," for he really does come out of himself to engage in an activity which is at least as meaningful to him as his own existence: "La Révolution;

on ne peut pas l'envoyer dans le feu: tout ce qui n'est pas elle est pire qu'elle..." (C: 159) In the previous writings of Malraux, fire was all-devouring. In Les Conquérants, there is finally a concept, Revolution, which cannot be encompassed by the flames. Malraux had discovered one possible method of defying the absurd; however, in the first novels, the scope of violence and revolution is limited to an individual commitment.

Garine's speech at the funeral of Tcheng-Dai shows the air of violence thick and dense over Canton: "L'idée de la mort est dans les conversations, dans les yeux, dans l'air, constante, présente comme la lumière[. ] Comme l'honnête homme qui coupa d'un coup de hache la main du voleur qui tentait d'ouvrir sa fenêtre, vous posséderez, demain, la main coupée de l'impérialisme anglais, Hong-Kong ruinée." (C: 178, 181)

Perhaps the most oppressive scene of horror and violence is the discovery of Klein's body. Garine has been his friend:

Je vois les quatre corps debout. Je les cherchais à terre. Ils sont déjà raides[. ] J'ai d'abord été saisi et presque étourdi: ces corps droits ont quelque chose, non de fantastique, mais de surréel, dans cette lumière et ce silence[. ] (C: 190)  
Je vois le corps de Klein[. ] une large tache au milieu du visage: la bouche agrandie au rasoir[. ] Je détourne les yeux: blessures ouvertes, grandes taches noires de sang caillé, yeux révoltés, tous les corps sont semblables. Ils ont été torturés...  
Je crois qu'ils ont coupé ses paupières. (C: 190-1)

It is man's inhumanity to man, and the weight of destiny which is so absurd here. The irony is that Klein's killers and Klein are both on the side of the Revolution. What is even worse, is

an idea which is developed more intensely in the later novels - the idea of the irremediable - when torture is followed by death, there is no greater atrocity. The mutilation of the eyes of the hostages recalls to Garine the story of the Emperor who blinded his prisoners. This form of violence is repeated twice in his writings of that year.

Garine is weakening, perhaps because of the mournful and lugubrious atmosphere of Canton. However, he still knows the value of being a "conqueror." "Il y a tout de même une chose qui compte, dans la vie: c'est de ne pas être vaincu..." (C: 197) He himself is wounded in the arm, and is informed that if he wishes to live, (he is dying of a tropical illness as well), he will have to leave Canton. Garine has always searched for power and intensity, and a direction for his activity. Now, he is obsessed by a recurrent dream. It is during the war. There are fifty soldiers in a room; there are many grotesque characters hidden in the shadows. There is a sinister "cortège," a soldier dressed as a priest, one dressed as a groom, and a "bride" held by two women of the game of massacre. Malraux will return to his surreal scenes only once or twice after this. The "bride" is a young soldier "qui s'est vanté de passer sa baïonnette au travers du corps du premier qui prétendrait le violer." (C: 200) The game continues, and the soldier is raped to repletion. Garine is disturbed by the absurdity of the dream, and its rapport with his absurd trial. The perverted violence in the dream is disturbing as well; it is yet another example of man's being oppressed by the forces of destiny. As he weakens physically, he

grows apart from his action, and dwells on himself: "...quand mon action se retire de moi, quand je commence à m'en séparer, c'est aussi du sang qui s'en va[.]. Je suis un joueur, comme tous les joueurs, je ne pense qu'à mon jeu, avec entêtement et avec force." (C: 200,1) Even though his fate closes in on him, he still wishes to act: "Une vie ne vaut rien, mais [.]. rien ne vaut une vie." (C: 201)

Garine is a "conqueror" Communist, one of those "qui sont en train de leur donner (to characters like Borodine) la Chine." (C: 211) However, once the Revolution ceases to be a Revolution, Garine's role is over. He is not capable of playing politics. "Garine ne croit qu'à l'énergie." (C: 207) Even though he is dying, he has to go in search of a place where his violent way will help him fight the absurd. Just prior to his leaving, Garine has the opportunity of a final act. Two double agents who were poisoning a well used by the Chinese Red Army troops, were brought before Garine. Garine gives them five minutes in which to confess the source of the cyanide. "La détonation. Le corps du Chinois ne bouge pas; sur son visage une expression intense de stupéfaction[.]. Une seconde... Deux... Le Chinois s'effondre, mou, les jambes à demi pliées. Et le sang commence à couler." (C: 219-220) This show of violence makes Garine feel alive. He strikes the remaining double agent across the jaw. There is no explanation for either of these last two acts of violence; they emanate from a man suffering from physical and emotional maladies, a man frustrated by his inability to, in his own eyes, leave a scar on the map; a man who sees his destiny just ahead of him.

He is a man anxious to still feel his own power to dominate people and things. His act of violence is yet another refusal to submit to destiny. He still has hope: "Maintenant, je sais ce qu'est l'Empire. Une tenace, une constante violence. Diriger. Déterminer. Contraindre. La vie est là..." (C: 226) The locale of the action is unimportant; what counts is the ability to combat destiny, to renew the battle against the absurd.

"L'aventure c'est ce qui convertit au sérieux de l'Instant, ce qui permet à l'individu d'aller au devant de sa Mort, d'exister près d'elle, de la contraindre, pour ainsi dire, à un combat singulier."<sup>(8)</sup> This direct combat of a character with his destiny renders forever significant his activity, his life, and even his death. Garine's life has been intensely connected with the search for his death, although he would not be likely to admit this. In his attempts to place himself in positions of danger and risk, he has called to death. He has defied it, and yet, he has always needed to know of its presence. Disease and death destroy Garine as they inevitably get each one of the able conquerors in the novels to follow. At least, Garine succeeds to a certain degree in alleviating some of the misery rampant in China while he is there. For this, he can feel that he has somehow diminished the capacity of destiny to totally overwhelm and humiliate man. Although he begins his affair with violence for entirely selfish motives, he announces the author's new search for the meaning of life, still making use of violence, but adding a new concept - fraternity.

The heroes of Malraux's first novel are forerunners of the characters of the novels to follow. In this first novel, each hero has reached "conqueror" status, although they differ greatly. Hong and Tcheng-Dai are practically black and white; Hong lives for and by violence. If this tool were removed from Hong, Hong would cease to exist. It is his way of justifying his existence, which has been a series of humiliations. Hong is unable to relate to others because hate can never be shared. Hong dies alone as does his more fully developed counterpart Tchen, of La Condition Humaine, because he wants no part of moderating his anger; few people can communicate with others and be simultaneously ruled by violence. Hong conquers his past by violently exterminating it; he is not interested in the future, for the future is born of hope - Hong cherishes no hopes. Tcheng-Dai runs from the violence Hong espouses. He has conquered the older Chinese by deceiving them and himself as well. He refuses violence for violence means change. He is as selfish as Hong: Hong's fight is a solitary one, since he does not concern himself with the rights and liberties of the Chinese who may not desire what he urges; he does not care who gets hurt. Tcheng-Dai cares only that China remain unscarred; he too takes no genuine interest in the plight of his people.

Klein foreshadows Katow of La Condition Humaine, and Nicolaïeff is the precursor of König of the same novel. There is always one character (Klein) thoroughly conquered by the absurd and crushed by destiny, to remind us that we must continue the fight against it. There is also a character (Nicolaïeff) who en-

joys a shallow victory, usually because he is the arm of destiny, obliging man to submit to his fate.

Borodine is a stereotype of the conquering hero who does everything by the rules. He will always be victorious because he plays the game well. He represents men who use violence when they know it will be successful, or they do not use it at all. Borodine has no thought of the Chinese people; if the International orders him to organize a Revolution in Brazil, he will go without hesitation. He is as committed as the Communist Party wills him to be. In a way, he too is selfish (for the International). Garine, on the other hand, has no selfish motive for being in China. True, he arrives in China looking for answers to his own personal crises; however, after four years, Garine comes as close to fraternal "engagement" as the author allows him to, in this first novel: as Malraux knows how to, at this point in his own development. Garine is a conqueror using violence to serve the cause of the Chinese Revolution, but not using it just for the sake of it. Violence is necessary to Garine, and to the Revolution. It helps Garine live intensely all his life; it can help the Revolution be successful, provided it is used as a tool to combat the absurd, and to enable the Chinese to be free of humiliation. Garine is not afraid of violence; however, he does not treat violence lightly. It is part of a moral dilemma which is partially responsible for Garine's sickness: "la maladie des chefs."

## II

La Voie Royale was written two years after Les Conquérants; however, its actions parallel the early actions of Malraux in Indochina, particularly the Banteay-Srei expedition. There are fewer characters in La Voie Royale than in Les Conquérants. There is a young narrator, Claude, through whose eyes we see all the important developments facing the protagonist, Perken. There is a narrator in Les Conquérants, and also in Royaume farfelu; the presence of the narrator in La Voie Royale is of greater importance. His relationship with Perken introduces the theme which pervades the subsequent novels of the author: the theme of fraternity, of sharing the combat necessary to adequately strike at destiny. The fraternity of La Voie Royale is far from shared battle in social revolution: here, fraternity is simply the joining of one man's fate to another in communal action to defy the absurd. Life is always lived intensively, violently, but always on a personal level. The characters of La Voie Royale seek no revolutions to engage in; their pursuit is the individual desire to "leave a scar on the map" - a way to gain lucidity by placing themselves continually vis-à-vis death.

A new area of violence is explored in this novel; it is erotic or sexual violence. The main character Perken, like Garine before him, is no longer young. Garine is dying slowly of a tropical ailment; Perken is threatened by impotence. Garine shoots two men to prove he exists, and is not yet about to die; Perken

attempts to dominate himself and others through his sexual exploits, hoping to ward off the abyss and eventual death. Still another area is that of nature's unpredictable violence. Man not only has to contend with man's stupidity and cruelty: he can also succumb to nature's weapons of destiny, which are equally capable of crushing him: insects, tropical forests, decomposition, etc. "This is the best novel of Malraux in which to learn his action answer to destiny."<sup>(9)</sup> (Action is defined as actual physical combat.) The characters of La Voie Royale are intoxicated with action; they do not wish to escape fate. On the contrary, they endeavor to hunt it down.

Erotic violence permits the characters another way to more intensively experience their existence. "Conquérants, mais conquérants malades et provisoires, l'érotisme leur apporte sur un plan limité ce que l'action leur apporte sur un plan plus vaste et plus essentiel: la conscience d'exister, une fin qu'on puisse valablement poursuivre et la possibilité d'échapper pour un temps, si bref soit-il à l'impuissance et au néant."<sup>(10)</sup> Perken's conversation is loaded with sexual imagery:

[.]Une adolescente noire, nue, une éblouissante tache de soleil sur le sein droit pointé. Les filles. Elles avançaient en rond, chacune frappant avec rage la croupe trop forte de celle qui la précédaient. Les yeux fermés, tendue, se libérant en faisant vibrer sans fin les muscles durs de ses fesses et de ses seins droits...(VR: 8)

The imagery is sensual but also hints of sadism. There are those who can only experience pleasure watching others suffer, or causing others to suffer; Perken feels most alive when involved in an erotic experience; either he has to dominate the experience

or visualize another who has "le besoin maniaque, le besoin d'aller jusqu'au bout de ses nerfs." (VR: 8) This violent sexual activity enables Perken to possess himself, or so he thinks. Perken genuinely believes he can triumph over his fate when he engages in intense action or erotic activity; he is totally self-obsessed. (In this respect, Garine and Les Conquérants postdate La Voie Royale, for Garine participates in a mass movement to conquer humiliation, even though he claims that he has no love for the Chinese.) The essential, according to Perken, is that the woman always be an object. "L'essentiel est de ne pas connaître le partenaire. Qu'elle soit: l'autre sexe." (VR: 10) Sexual activity is just another means for man to explore and to possess himself; he tries to conquer himself through another. (Perken really reiterates much of what the author felt at this time in his life. Love did not appear in the Malraux novels until it truly appeared in his life, upon his encountering Josette Clotis.) A scene described by Claude at this point, seems to reinforce Perken's own opinion:

Un jour, on me mène à Paris, dans un petit bordel minable. Au salon il y avait une seule femme, attachée sur un chevalet par des cordes, les jupes relevées[.]de dos. Autour, six ou sept types[.]Ils s'approchaient de la femme, l'un après l'autre, la fessaient - payaient et s'en allaient.  
(VR: 9-10)

Often men need sadistic sexual release to feel that they are still potent. "Il se crée dans les rapports érotiques entre eux et les partenaires une communauté qu'ils dirigent et dans laquelle ils sont les maîtres."<sup>(11)</sup> Their domination is but pro-

visional, however, as can be determined by their needs to reexperience their sadistic pleasures time and time again.

Claude and Perken meet aboard ship where many of the Malraucian adventures begin. Consistent with Perken's personality, he informs Claude of his wish to emulate the legendary king of the Sedangs, Mayrena. David de Mayrena was a Dutchman with a kingdom in Indochina. He was a white conquistador, brutal, and was dominated by a superb will power which permitted him to suffer torture calmly. Perken tells Claude: "[...] Vous savez qu'il est devenu roi en combattant deux chefs sedangs au sabre." (VR: 12) Malraux says of Perken:

[...] Mon personnage de Perken est né de Mayrena. Plus exactement de ce qui unit Mayrena à un type d'aventurier disparu. Le livre et le personnage sont nés d'une méditation sur ce que l'homme peut contre la mort. D'où ce type de héros sans cause, prêt à risquer la torture pour la seule idée qu'il a de lui-même, et peut-être pour une sorte de saisie fulgurante de son destin, - parce que le risque de la torture lui paraît seul vainqueur de la mort. (A: 479)

It is ironic that Mayrena receives the protectorate of Sedang just before he dies, after having been bitten by a snake. He dies alone and in agony, for death exacts the highest retribution from those who defy it most valiantly.

Perken is the same "being-against-death" that Mayrena was. He is looking for the adventure that will take him out of society and its conventions, into the world of intensity and lucidity. Claude defines Perken as "celui qui n'a pas voulu vivre dans la communauté des hommes, lorsque l'âge commence à l'atteindre, et qu'il est seul." (VR: 14) Most Malraucian heroes are asocial and

amoral; they reject the world and its established values, are obsessed with death, and in their ardent desire to conquer it, they always finish by confronting it, and being overwhelmed by it. Perken removes himself from the confines of society, by hunting for a man in the unsubdued regions of Siam and Cambodia. As Garine, Perken needs the "ambiance" of the East to find himself. He has already spent time with one of the jungle tribes, and has scars to prove it. Perken speaks against suicide even in view of the most violent torture, for "celui qui se tue court après une image qu'il s'est formée de lui-même: on ne se tue jamais que pour exister. Je n'aime pas qu'on soit dupe de Dieu." (VR: 13) Moreover, with suicide, a man is incapable of actively living his death, and combatting it to the very last. Suicide is a submission that death has truly triumphed. (Klein had also opposed suicide; however, Malraux himself had divided thoughts about this concept, as can be seen by the condoning of the "suicide" of his grandfather by his father.) Although he has been tortured by the natives, he returns where many of his predecessors have been killed, for he experiences the compulsion to court death.

Perken's German-Danish origins render him another foreigner in the Orient. Like Garine, he needs to be where the action is most intense. Like Garine, he can never be a part of parlor politics: "[. . .] Non, je ne crois pas qu'il finisse dans un bureau: voyez, il revient en Asie." (VR: 16) Claude's sympathies lie with Perken for he too has the need to alienate himself from society. Claude's background resembles that of young André: proud

of descending from privateers, proud of the individuality and non-conformity of his grandfather, obsessed with the solitude and the premature death of his mother, she had separated from his father who was then killed in the war - he was raised on these memories of solitude and death. Even his grandfather, who envied the deaths of the sailors lost at sea, "s'était fendu le crâne. Était mort ainsi. D'une mort de vieux Viking." (VR: 21) Claude already has a strong dislike for the material aspects of his existence; he is about to reinforce the teachings of his grandfather: that every moment of one's life must be filled with significant activity; once the intensity and violence ebb from life, life wanes.

Claude and Perken are ready for partnership. The former takes his youth in search of adventure and treasure, looking for temples along the Royal Way; the latter takes his age and experience in pursuit of new, unexplored areas of knowledge and conquest. Claude is André: he is twenty-six years of age, a student of Oriental languages, and involved in work in which there has been little earlier investigation. The unknown appeals to Claude as it has to Perken. Claude hopes to carve out the Khmer temple dancers, and earn a good deal of money. Perken joins the quest because it promises to bring him face to face with peril. Both characters are bound by "l'obsession de la mort. Ce qu'ils appellent l'aventure n'est pas une fuite, c'est une chasse." (VR: 36,7) Claude yearns for violence; it is as intense as the sexual drive: "L'austère domination dont il venait de parler à Perken, celle de la mort, se répercutait en lui avec le battement du sang à ses

tempes, aussi impérieuse que le besoin sexuel." (VR: 37) Claude encounters the same difficulties which the author encountered during his mission in Indochina. He is instructed by Albert Ramèges, director of the French Institute of Indochina, that any and all treasures Claude will find belong to the country. Claude disputes this, claiming that since the area has been unexplored, he is entitled to keep what he uncovers. The issue is never clearly resolved, as was true of the events of 1924-5.

Adventure is:

an escape from the bourgeoisie performed dramatically and with style and bravado. ]  
 a slap in the face of existing values, a  
 vindication of a man's right to achieve  
 his own personal freedom. ] not so much a way  
 of exalting or amusing oneself; rather,  
 it is crushing ants beneath the palms of  
 one's hands; it is insects, reptiles,  
 repulsive dangers confronted at every step  
 by someone making his way through the  
 brush. (12)

These are definitions Malraux gave of adventure in an interview with Candide. This is what both Perken and Claude engage in, because, as Perken states: "Je veux laisser une cicatrice sur cette carte." (VR: 60) Perken endures the jungle for two reasons: firstly, he has to meet Grabot, a fellow dissenter from society whose will is so strong that he does himself harm to prove a point; secondly, he hopes to lead native tribes against the colonizing interests in an effort to obtain immortality. There is a bit of T. E. Lawrence in him, as there was in the author: "Etre roi est idiot; ce qui compte, c'est de faire un royaume." (VR: 60) This second "cause" of Perken has no humanitarian origins; it is Perken's second way to dominate destiny through action, his

first being through erotic domination.

Claude's guide Xa is another example of Claude's rejection of society's rules and regulations. Xa is a former prisoner, and Claude literally entrusts his life to him. Just prior to Claude's and Perken's departure, Claude is notified that the temples he hopes to examine have been declared historic monuments. Once again, events are very autobiographical; once again, Claude decides as Malraux nevertheless to continue his mission.

Perken's desire for a military force is a play against death. He hopes that Claude might die young, since as you become older, your opportunities for engaging in violent activity become fewer. Your role in life is fixed; your capacity to act is limited; you become a prisoner of yourself, and you can but await death. This is one thing Perken refuses to do; he will engage in even a futile effort if it allows him the possibility to exercise power, the same potency he realizes he is losing in his sexual feats. He needs more and more women to convince him that he is escaping the abyss: "Songez que je commence à comprendre leurs cultes érotiques, cette assimilation de l'homme qui arrive à se confondre, jusqu'aux sensations, avec la femme qu'il prend, à s'imaginer elle sans cesser d'être lui-même[.] Non, ce ne sont pas des corps, ces femmes: ce sont des...possibilités." (VR: 62-3)

Grabot is able to temporarily beat destiny and show his control by masochistic deeds. Grabot's masochism is indeed a violent attempt to prove his mastery over fate; he wins a battle,

but he is to lose the war:

Pendant son service militaire, il prend en haine un médecin-major qui ne l'avait pas 'reconnu' lorsqu'il était malade. Il se fait porter malade à nouveau la semaine suivante, va à l'infirmierie: "Encore toi? Des boutons - Où ça?" L'autre ouvre la main: six boutons de culotte. Un mois de prison. Il écrit aussitôt au général, précisant une maladie des yeux. Dès son entrée en prison (j'oubliais de vous dire qu'il avait une blennorragie) il prend du pus blennorragique, sachant parfaitement ce qu'il faisait, se le colle dans l'oeil. Fait punir le major. Perd l'oeil, bien entendu. (VR: 64)

It is this same Grabot who reminds Perken of Mayrena, and who Perken wants to locate. And so, Perken and Claude penetrate the jungle and its world of decay: the immense forest, the insects, the animals, the decomposition, the thick brush - all of these forces of nature try to prevent the heroes from achieving their goals. It is as if nature knows itself to be destiny, having as its purpose the destruction of all men who refuse to submit to it. As they cut and crawl through the jungle, the odor of burning flesh reaches them; they are surrounded by snakes and plagued by centipedes. The heat suffocates them: "La forêt reprenait sa puissance de prison. Dépendance, abandon de la volonté, de la chair même. Comme si le sang, pulsation à pulsation, s'écoulait. Et soudain, il (Claude) trouva dans la terreur le besoin de se défendre encore." (VR: 83) It is this opportunity to defend themselves that makes their adventure meaningful; though they suffer hardship, the intensity of their experience is without equal.

Although they obtain the sought for treasures through much effort, their risks are not over. Their guides leave them

(they are unwilling to go any further), and they are obliged to hazard a trip through the region of a recalcitrant tribe, the Stiengs (where Grabot is said to rule), so as to avoid taking the stones through French territory. Claude has to summon all his powers to convince himself to continue. They have to go on, for to stop at this point for fear of what harm might befall them in the hands of men, after successfully combatting nature, would be totally ludicrous. In any case, they expect Grabot to be of assistance to them, a man for whom "le pouvoir doit se définir par la possibilité d'en abuser." (VR: 96) In addition to the self-blinding episode, Grabot represents the acme of man's ability to dominate his will, as illustrated by this second occurrence: "Pour avoir éprouvé une violente répulsion nerveuse en voyant un (scorpion), il est allé se faire piquer exprès." (VR: 97)

As Claude and Perken penetrate further into the jungle, it is as if nature takes revenge on their violation of her forests and hidden temples. They come across the savagery of the Stiengs and their weapons of death: poisonous war darts. "Les Mois combattaient ici avec des objets fins et meurtriers." (VR: 103) Perken senses the presence of death: "La mort est là. Comme l'irréfutable preuve de l'absurdité de la vie. Ce qui pèse sur moi c'est, ...ma condition d'homme. Je ne veux pas être soumis." (VR: 107) He does not fear death's presence; he rejoices in the close contact he will have with it, because it will render his life dearer to him:

Claude: - Vous voulez mourir avec une conscience intense de la mort, sans faiblir?

Perken: - Vous ne connaissez pas l'exaltation qui sort de l'absurdité de la vie, lorsqu'on

est en face d'elle comme une femme[.]  
 déshabillée. Nue, tout à coup[.] Ce n'est  
 pas pour mourir que je pense à ma mort,  
 c'est pour vivre. (VR: 109)

Again, Perken reduces the crises of life and death to erotic and sexual imagery.

When they finally find Grabot, it is neither disgust nor fear that they feel before this blind, inhuman slave that was once a man; it is "une terreur sacrée, l'horreur de l'inhumain..." (VR: 118) Grabot is the living example of destiny's power to vanquish man to the degree that he cannot be distinguished from the animals. Destiny's servants, both nature and man himself, are responsible for subjugating Grabot as punishment for his violent essays to overcome his fate. Grabot has been so dehumanized by the Stiengs (he is their prisoner, not their ruler), that he has lost the capacity of speech. He can utter only one word: "Rien." Perken refuses to let the situation alone; he wants to liberate the once powerful giant despite the overwhelming odds - the entire Stieng tribe. Grabot has ceased to care; he is humiliation personified. This is a typical Malraucian end for a conquering hero: complete submission to destiny. Grabot marches round and round a wheel to which he is tied, in automaton fashion, while the Stiengs plant their war darts outside the cabin in which Grabot, Perken and Claude are prisoners: "autour, ces gueules de fauves, cet instinct de sadiques, précis et bestial comme ce crâne de gaur à dents de mort; et Perken pétrifié." (VR: 129-30) It is not the fear of violence or death which has frightened Perken; it is the fear of unknown terror as symbolized by the

skull of the wild buffalo hanging at the entrance of the Stieng village.

"Pourtant on pouvait combattre. Tuer enfin!" The way the conqueror faces the unknown is by challenging it:

[.]L'irréductible humiliation de l'homme traqué par sa destinée éclatait. La lutte contre la déchéance se déchainait en lui ainsi qu'une fureur sexuelle[.]Et le désir forcené que tout cela existât pour qu'un homme, enfin, pût cracher à la face de la torture, en toute conscience et en toute volonté même en hurlant[.]Il se sentit lutter contre une folie fascinante. (VR: 130-1)

Perken defies destiny on two levels: firstly, he hunts it like prey; he has to try to subjugate it or it will force him to yield. Secondly, his combat with destiny and death is symbolized again in terms of sexuality; Perken battles the humiliation brought on by the knowledge that he can no longer function adequately sexually - if he is impotent, he will lose his conquest of the absurd, and death will be certain to follow.

Perken goes out of the cabin to literally challenge the unknown. He has a revolver which he points in the direction of the Stiengs; as he proceeds towards them, he falls and wounds himself on a sharp plant. However, his will keeps him in motion: "La volonté[.]je jetait vers la torture avec cette puissance d'animal fasciné." (VR: 131) He recalls a scene which has already been written into Royaume farfelu - the scene of the chieftain who was imprisoned with snakes, and chanted his war songs as he died, brandishing his fists. It is important that Perken look as if he has control of the situation, even though his pain is great.

(He has fallen a second time: this time, on a war dart.) "Jeté sexuellement sur cette liberté à l'agonie, soulevé par une volonté forcenée se possédant elle-même devant cette imminente destruction, il s'enfonçait dans la mort même..." (VR: 134) Interestingly enough, Perken feels most alive at this moment - when death has entered his body.

Perken even makes use of his own blood to ward off his death and the death of Grabot and Claude. His offer to the Stiengs of one hundred sacred jars in exchange for the life of an important captive such as Grabot, is accepted because of the "powers" Perken exhibits:

Perken [.] tira le Colt. -Regardez le gaur...  
 Perken tira. Une tache de sang s'écrasa  
 entre les deux cornes, s'agrandit du cen-  
 tre vers les bords; une rigole rouge hésita,  
 descendit [.] goutte à goutte... (Perken has)  
 [.] rempli une de ses balles creuses avec le  
 sang de son genou. (VR: 144-5)

However, Perken's symbolic orgasm is over; he has engaged himself in sexual success for the last time; from this moment on, his life will ebb from him, as he realizes his impotency: "[.] Lorsqu'il avait risqué torture et déchéance en craignant de n'y pouvoir résister, il avait été à tel point arraché à lui-même qu'il ne se sentait plus en face que d'une vie de brouillard..." (VR: 142)

Perken's poisoned knee is similar to Garine's tropical disease: both ailments are long and lingering, hardly a proper end for two conquering heroes. Perken's case is diagnosed as hopeless; he is to die of slow poisoning, in great agony. This is the

punishment he is to suffer for his challenge of the absurd. Perken is a fighter and continues his battle with death. As he lies dying, he is aware for the first time, of the friendship of Claude, and his fraternal courage and compassion. We, the readers, also see this new element which will take shape in the following novels. Claude grows from his experience with Perken to develop into the more complex heroes of La Condition Humaine, who have a strong notion as to the value of virility, courage and anguish braving the absurd.

Perken has two additional opportunities to opt for living: one is on the plane of action; the other is on a sexual level. He finally learns what he has suspected for a while: domination through sexual activity does not enable him to possess or to be "the other;" it does not even enable him to possess himself. He has deceived himself all along:

Tout le visage, toute la femme étaient dans sa bouche tendue. Ce corps affolé de soi-même s'éloignait de lui sans espoir. Jamais, jamais il ne connaîtrait les sensations de cette femme. On ne possède que ce qu'on aime. (VR: 157-8)

His other gesture involves the Stieng village, and the villages of other native tribes. He wishes to prevent their repression by the colonial government which uses the martyred Grabot as a pretext for subduing all the tribes, and pushing through a profitable railway system. He does not do this so much to help the natives, but to feel his own power and importance as leader of the uprising. When he witnesses the Stieng village wiped out, he is enraged: "Il se sentait furieusement vivant contre cette

affirmation de sa déchéance. De nouveau, combattre." (VR: 163)

It is difficult for Perken to see that not only is death conquering him physically via his impotency and his general debilitation, but it is also erasing all evidence of his leaving a scar on the map. Like Garine who kills the double agent for no apparent motive, Perken also craves tasting once again the sensation of mastery over his fate: he attempts to aid another village against the colonial army. This village not only does not want assistance, but it accuses Perken of being responsible for the attack of the remaining Stiengs upon it. In his rage, he shoots two men, and comes close to killing the chief: "Il éprouva furieusement le désir de tirer sur lui, comme si le meurtrre seul eût pu lui permettre d'affirmer son existence, de lutter contre sa propre fin." (VR: 174)

With this final burst of energy, Perken has removed all the obstacles between himself and death. He is all pain now; he does not even have room in his mind for Claude. Claude is a part of the living, and Perken has joined the world of the dead: "Il n'y a pas...de mort...Il y a seulement...moi...qui vais mourir." (VR: 182) Malraux said in an interview with the left-wing Monde in 1930 that the essential element of La Voie Royale is the projection in terms of an extremely violent situation of the fundamental solitude of man in the face of death.<sup>(13)</sup> This is accurate. The protagonist of this novel is in the quest of death. Life only has value for Perken when he violently combats its rival, death. His struggle has meaning to him only in so much as it is a solitary one; he faces the Stiengs individually as

he faced all the events of his life - alone. Perken uses violence to prove that he exists: he thrives on sexual domination to verify that he is not impotent; he plunges blindly and forcefully into action so as never to sit in dread of the unknown and the terrors that it conceals. However, he is just a man, and if he manages to win major victories over death and the absurd in his contests against men or even against himself, it is clearly even more ironic that it is nature or destiny camouflaged as the jungle, insects, or even poisoned darts, which strikes back at him in the name of death.

Grabot and Claude are essential to the novel, but it is Perken who gives it life. Grabot is another Klein: the character always there to remind us of the overwhelming power of destiny to crush man, and how absurd is life if that is the way it need end. He is particularly pitiful, for he has been a true conqueror, and to see him reduced to such a miserable condition, makes us aware of how little we can do to prevent fate from conquering us. Claude is the young renegade, as is the narrator of Les Conquérants, although Claude is sketched for us in greater detail. Claude refutes society, but he is still young; death is an indirect addition to his vocabulary. He is obsessed by solitude and death because he saw their interrelationship at work on his family. Claude needs Perken to learn of the authentic significance of life by constantly coming into contact with violence and death. Perken needs Claude to have a witness to his domination of his "condition humaine."

\* \* \* \* \*

Malraux's first "human" heroes meet violent adventure as individuals. Alone, they seek their equilibrium, which they can never achieve, through challenges to society's conventions, acts of daring, destruction, etc. They want so much to escape the tragic realm of death, that in their mad flight, they are eventually snared by it. Their "élan" is pure energy; they feel the need to live as intensely as possible, believing that in this way they can defy their fate and conquer the absurd. These self-sufficient heroes run to the Orient where, as young Malraux, they hope to appease the malaise plaguing their spirit. These conquerors are in search of the one monumental action which will permit them to scar the map, granting them permanency in time, and a way to vainquish what they fear most, death. They want for themselves the dignity which is replaced by humiliation in the confrontation with the absurd. They struggle alone; their thirst for adventure can never be satisfied, for each time they near the conclusion of a state of tension, they sense the end of life, and must locate another situation of acute excitement.

Some hunt not only violent adventure, but terror, which they hope will restore to them what they feel has been denied them. However, in their acts of murder, they really pursue ways to possess themselves; in this, they are doomed to failure, usually dying horribly and alone, as examples to all who expect to

triumph over destiny and the absurd in similar manner.

The first heroes make no compromises. They willingly choose whatever activity frays the nerves, and they detest all those who do not act accordingly. There are certain anti-heroes who avoid all conflict, refusing to face death or life, for that matter. In any case, whichever road these early Malraucian creations follow, they voyage individually. They all lack the spirit of camaraderie. There are those who accomplish more than others, for they are not afraid to oppose the human condition. For this reason, Garine and Perken may be classified as stage one Malraucian heroes. They are at least capable of action, unafraid of violence, aware of man's state of humiliation, and how it is of paramount importance to rectify this circumstance. They have not yet discovered virile fraternity and its compensation for life's fragility in resisting fate. However, in both their portraits, the seed of humanism is there, although dormant.

Garine and Perken use violence because it engages them in a campaign against death. Leading an insurrection or braving a hostile native tribe gives the hero an opportunity to exercise his "volonté de puissance." In the face of all hazards, the early Malraucian hero can and does rejoice at his unrestrained defiance of destiny. In the case of Garine, he even succeeds in indirectly diminishing the humiliations of others; because of this, he actually postdates Perken whose struggle against the absurd is that of a solitary figure, in quest of one man's victory over fate. Garine and Perken are intoxicated with violence for violence supposedly impedes death. Perhaps it postpones death,

but it does not prevent it altogether; Garine and Perken are destined to die, in agonizing fashion, for those who defy destiny most valiantly perish most cruelly, and Malraux must have already sensed the vanity of man's efforts in this area. As "beings-against-death," Garine and Perken look towards violence as a means to test their will. Self-inflicted violence, erotic domination, sadism, political and military control, are outlets for the frustrations of these men who know they are going to expire. The violent and painful wounds received by the two are nothing in comparison with the void they see in front of them, when the intensity of the experience withdraws before their eyes. Submission to destiny is the root of all evil, the overpowering capacity of fate to crush man. Malraux does not permit his heroes not to witness their eventual demise; in revealing Klein's mutilated body and Grabot's dehumanized state, Malraux increases the horror of the heroes who visualize their own end in the mortifying conditions of their companions.

Garine and Perken resist violently because there is no alternative. They cannot sit quietly, awaiting death; if they combat intensively, they challenge the absurd to the utmost. They never allow fear to rule them, for fear is accompanied by humiliation, and humiliation is an agent of the absurd. Garine and Perken select violence to combat the anguish which could easily defeat them. They wish to prevail over destiny, and eternize themselves. They struggle apart, for theirs is the strain of man over himself. It is only when man comprehends his own anxieties, under-

stands his own fears, and exercises his will in the direction that he will endeavor to defeat the conditions of the absurd for all men, that he is ready for fraternal combat. Violence awakens the individual to his task, and places him in tension-provoking circumstances; now, it will serve a social and political purpose as well, as men draw together in united confrontation with the absurd.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Pierre de Boisdeffre, Malraux, pp.38-9.
- <sup>2</sup>W. M. Frohock, André Malraux and the Tragic Imagination, p.16.
- <sup>3</sup>Robert Payne, A Portrait of André Malraux, p.136.
- <sup>4</sup>Lucien Goldmann, Pour une sociologie du roman, p.75.
- <sup>5</sup>In La Condition Humaine, we learn how much more difficult it is to take one's life by the knife than by the gun. It is intriguing that a man who is afraid of the possible repercussions of violence can contemplate one of the most violent ways to die. On the other hand, suicide is not an alien thought to Malraux; if a man chooses his death consciously, one can only have respect for him.
- <sup>6</sup>This was to be one of the reasons for Malraux's not joining the Communist Party: he was too much of an individual to blindly follow Party orders, and he placed a great value on personal freedoms.
- <sup>7</sup>Malraux had been in charge of Propaganda for the Annamites in Indochina; he, however, was not as able as Garine in controlling the law.
- <sup>8</sup>Serge Gaulupeau, André Malraux et la Mort, p.34.
- <sup>9</sup>Edward Gannon, S. J., The Honor of Being a Man: The World of André Malraux, p.44.
- <sup>10</sup>Goldmann, op. cit., p.83.
- <sup>11</sup>Loc. cit.
- <sup>12</sup>Payne, op. cit., pp.61, 59.
- <sup>13</sup>Cecil Jenkins, André Malraux, p.44.

PART III

VIOLENCE AND REVOLUTION: THEIR EVENTUAL REPUDIATION

## CHAPTER I

### VIOLENCE IN THE SERVICE OF THE REVOLUTION

- I. Failures, Cowards, and Heroes: La Condition Humaine
  1. Terrorism, torture, domination: three ineffectual modes of violence - Tchen, König, Ferral
  2. Drugs, mythomania, gambling: doomed endeavors to escape violence - Gisora, Clappique
  3. Virile fraternity: the true Malraucian hero, personification of action, lucidity, and courage, espouses a cause greater than his personal needs - Hemmelrich, Katow, Kyo
- II. Total revolutionary commitment: the first complete Malraucian hero: Le Temps du Mépris - Kassner

"Qu'on s' imagine un nombre d'hommes dans les chaînes, et tous condamnés à la mort, dont les uns étant chaque jour égorgés à la vue des autres, ceux qui restent voient leur propre condition dans celle de leurs semblables, et, se regardant les uns et les autres avec douleur et sans espérance, attendent leur tour. C'est l'image de la condition des hommes."

Pascal

Malraux chose the title of his third novel inspired by this apothegm of Pascal. Until this point, Malraux's novels have dealt with solitary heroes seeking adventure, and hoping to discover a successful way to free themselves from the impact of destiny. The Malraucian heroes have been on an "ego" trip: they have tried to conquer death and the absurd conditions of their world by hunting for destiny through their intense activities in foreign places, and through their erotic domination of people. This did not succeed. Malraux's early heroes died alone and in agony, without realizing their wish to be an eternal part of the battle against the absurd.

The new Malraucian hero has basically the same desires. He has an insatiable thirst for violent action which will give him ample opportunity to face his enemy - death. However, his action is not misguided; he is not giving up on society in the hopes of saving himself alone. His efforts include the salvation of man in general. He still espouses violent action; this time, violent action alters in meaning. The heroes of La Condition Humaine and of Le Temps du Mépris engage in social and political revolutionary action. They commit themselves to bettering the conditions of all by fraternally combining their efforts with that of their "brothers" in a united protest against the ravages of fate. They still see misery, and destiny's other powers at work around them - i. e. men in chains, condemned to death, etc; however, when they live their violence together, it has new significance, and for Malraux at this stage in his literary career, it temporarily strikes with success at death and

the absurd. There are evidences that Malraux had not yet completely rejected models of his earlier heroes; hence, the presence of characters who are doomed to failure because they either try to escape violence, or they try to deal with it alone. Their modes of violence, terrorism, torture, and domination, are either ineffectual, or their endeavors to escape violence, be it through drugs, mythomania or gambling, are doomed, for these characters have either chosen to submit to destiny or to serve it, instead of challenging it. Erotic domination, cowardly inquisition, intense hatred, gaming, and thought are means used by the anti-heroes to escape their conquest of destiny; there are, however, positive values such as virile fraternity and love, which when married to violence, tend to weaken the vigor of the inevitable. The new heroes are no longer obsessed by their own death; they substitute fraternal "engagement," and even though they might die, "it is easier to die when one does not die alone." (CH: 247)

Ultimately, Malraux portrays the total revolutionary hero in his Le Temps du Mépris. It is through the changing stages of his own thought processes that we fully comprehend the evolution of the revolutionary hero from anti-hero, escapist, or "bourreau" to the complete man engaged in self-sacrificing combat with death and destiny. It is only through a sequential study of the various characters that we can reach the same conclusions as did the author as to the true significance of violence and its role in Revolution, and the inevitable rejection of both.

## I

The Chinese Revolution is the "backdrop" of the novel La Condition Humaine. Violence and suffering, "living-toward-death," execution and crime, terror, torture, and cruelty, touch all of the leading characters.<sup>(1)</sup> The book opens with a crime. There is no more ship and no more narrator; the author plunges his characters, his readers and himself directly into violence. Tchen is an anti-hero, wedded to violence as was Hong (Les Conquérants) before him. As he is about to commit his first murder for the Chinese Revolution, he experiences both the fascination and the nausea concomitant with the taking of a life: "L'angoisse lui tordait l'estomac. ]Découvert? Combattre, combattre des ennemis qui se défendent, des ennemis éveillés. ]Il se répétait que cet homme devait mourir. Bêtement: car il savait qu'il le tuerait." (CH: 7) Tchen's moral dilemma stems from his Christian upbringing; he knows that killing this man is not just the act: "assassiner n'est pas seulement tuer." (CH: 8) His problem involves his need to take a life to enable a multitude of others to be free from subjugation. He is aware that he will feel apart, as did Klein (Les Conquérants), as do all those who cannot accept conditions as they are, and use violence to implement change.

Tchen possesses some of Grabot's (La Voie Royale) qualities. Before inflicting death upon his victim, Tchen gives punishment to himself to examine the resistance of his own flesh. His masochism is a test of his ability to dominate his will, an-

other characteristic of his predecessors, Grabot and Perken:

"Convulsivement, Tchen enfonça le poignard dans son bras gauche. C'était le sang de son bras qui coulait goutte à goutte." (CH: 8)

Blood congealed and black is a repeated Malraucian image. He himself was still obsessed with violence and death, (even though some of his characters appear to be less so):

D'un coup à traverser une planche, Tchen l'arrêta dans un bruit de mousseline déchirée, mêlé à un choc sourd. Sensible jusqu'au bout de la lame, il sentit le corps rebondir vers lui. Le long du poignard le sang commençait à sourdre, noir dans cette fausse lumière. Il était seul avec la mort, seul dans un lieu sans hommes, mollement écrasé à la fois par l'horreur et par le goût du sang. (CH: 9-10)

This entire scene really did occur, however; Malraux's friend and assistant on Indochine and Indochine Enchaînée was attacked in just such a manner, as he lay sleeping; fortunately, he awoke in time to save his life. Even the creation of Tchen is based on Hin, an authentic Annamite who worked for Indochine, and tried to assassinate the governor of Indochina, Cognacq. Like Tchen, he too was crippled by hate: "A cause de lui (Cognacq) on arrache les champs aux nhaqués, on tue nos hommes en Syrie et au Maroc, on nous écrase d'impôts. Il faut que cela change." (Clara Malraux reports this in Les Combats et les Jeux.)<sup>(2)</sup> Like Hin, Tchen needs to commit a violent act, to push through the changes he feels are necessary for the amelioration of the Chinese. Once the act is committed, Tchen no longer belongs to the Chinese people or even to the Revolution; he is part of the world of murder. His reaction, like that of Perken (La Voie Royale) after defying

the Stiengs in a show of magical power, is one of sexual release: after the frenzy of killing, he is limp, overwhelmed by the very presence of death. His deed is so all-encompassing, that it overshadows his mission, which is to collect a document needed by the Revolutionaries.

Tchen kills at night for night is the best time for Evil to occur, since Saturn's kingdom is the kingdom of the dark. It is the time of the unknown, the hours when despair reigns. Perken walks out to meet the Stiengs before dawn; the fire at the hotel of the Fireman of Massacre occurs during the night; many of Garine's (Les Conquérants) evenings are filled with garish nightmares.

After shedding the blood of his enemy, Tchen goes to the home of Gisors, who is the spiritual leader of the revolutionaries. Tchen is different; this murder has separated him from the others. He attributes to it the same feeling of pride he enjoyed when he first slept with a woman - the same joy at not being the vanquished party, but on the side of the conquerors. The comparison with erotic domination is evident. Tchen discovers that horror at the sight of the spilled blood is not the only sentiment he has; he has become fascinated with it, and with the greater concept of death. He is as attracted to both as is the moth to the light; he cannot help himself - his addiction towards homicide will place him in constant contact with his own death, and he will be unable to pull away. Apparently, this is what he has searched for all along, for he literally forgets to place himself subservient to the cause of the Revolution: death, and his pursuit

of it, become his new cause: "[...]l'action dans les groupes de choc ne suffisait plus au jeune homme, le terrorisme devenait pour lui une fascination[.]Capable de vaincre mais non de vivre dans sa victoire, que peut-il appeler, sinon la mort?" (CH: 51) Tchen is now incapable of pursuing life; his attraction towards death, that of others as well as his own, has numbered him amongst the "bourreaux," who are most alive when torturing and killing victims.

Tchen is multi-faceted whereas Hong is not. Hong becomes a terrorist because terrorism nourishes his hatred, the only thought with which he can live comfortably. Tchen's Christian background has given him the knowledge of death and the absurd, and the anguish he feels causes him to rebel violently against both. Hong wants the self-respect denied a poor man; Tchen wants much more: he would like to wipe out all the misery and humiliation which lead to death; in effect, he would like to destroy death itself. Ironically, Tchen chooses murder, and unwittingly serves as death's agent:

Celui-là (Tchen) s'était jeté dans le monde du meurtre, et n'en sortirait plus: avec son acharnement, il entrait dans la vie terroriste comme dans une prison. Avant dix ans, il serait pris - torturé ou tué; jusque-là, il vivait comme un obsédé résolu, dans le monde de la décision et de la mort. Ses idées l'avaient fait vivre; maintenant, elles allaient le tuer. (CH: 52)

Political "engagement" gives meaning to Tchen's solitude; it satisfies his hatred, and at the same time, it enables him to outwardly show that he is working towards change for all the Chinese.

Tchen provides his terrorists with an arsenal of violence:

Deux tenaient des fusils sous le bras, le canon vers la terre. Sept portaient des revolvers du Shan-Tung; un, une grenade; quelques autres en cachaient dans leurs poches. Une trentaine tenaient des couteaux, des casse-tête, des baïonnettes; huit ou dix, sans aucune arme, restaient accroupis près de tas de chiffons, de touques à pétrole, de rouleaux de fils de fer. (CH: 74)

However, his attempts to join their violence somehow fail - he remains apart: "Il n'était pas des leurs. Malgré le meurtre, malgré sa présence. S'il mourait aujourd'hui, il mourrait seul. Malgré la fusillade que le vent mou apportait de toute la ville, la violence lui donnait la sensation d'une action solitaire."

(CH: 74, 83) Tchen is rather an early Malraucian hero, destined to fail because he cannot share the motivation of the rest of the revolutionaries.

Malraux does justice to the scenes of battle in La Condition Humaine, making them literally "drip with blood":

[.]Un homme égorgé[.] À terre, trois corps[.] Sous le tir des policiers des fenêtres, deux (hommes) étaient tombés au milieu de la rue, les genoux à la poitrine, comme des lapins boulés; un autre, la face dans une tache rouge, semblait saigner du nez[.] Dans le coin, un des prisonniers, une jambe arrachée, hurlait aux siens: 'Ne tirez plus!' [.] Le mur était constellé de sang et de chair. (CH: 75, 79, 84)

Whereas in the earlier novels violence was encountered alone, we have our first scenes of group violence. Tchen and his terrorists are there, although he cannot completely commune with them. He is somewhat more compassionate than Hong, for he can empathize with agony, even if it is the pain of an enemy. Although filled

with hate, Tchen assists one of the wounded police agents: "Son angoisse était d'être blessé au ventre; elle lui était pourtant moins intolérable que la vue de cet être torturé et ficelé, que cette impuissance humaine dans la douleur." (CH: 79-80) Tchen's Christian charity cause him to feel compassion despite himself: while both he and Hong espouse violence, Hong would be happy to witness the excruciating deaths of his enemies; Tchen, aware of the powers of destiny over man, cannot tolerate accepting the torture or death of any man who himself no longer has the capacity to contend with these servants of fate.

Even in his endeavor to join the "human chain" of insurgents, Tchen senses he does not belong. "Est-ce que le sang même est vain?" (CH: 85) Tchen's "blood wedding" (for he has been wounded in the arm - the same location as his self-inflicted wound), fails to help him to unite with the others. Since he is alone, he must find one gesture which will at least make his death count for him, since he has difficulty living at peace with himself and the world. When Tchen encounters the pastor who has given him religious instruction, Tchen is already carrying the bomb he will use to kill Chang-Kai-Shek. Tchen rejects contemplating man's suffering; in effect, he rejects religion. He sees that one must act, even violently, to conquer the anguish of the world. The pastor knows, however, that Tchen's motives are not true: he is interested only in possessing himself, in creating for himself an immortality as necessary to him as it was to Perken before him - a means for him to leave an egotistical scar on the map.

In his assassination attempt on the life of Chang-Kai-Shek, Tchen differs from his two companions Pei' and Souen. The latter take their first failure as an omen, and are not willing to commit suicide a second time. Tchen awakens to his suicide as the final solution to his problem. Again, it is night, hour of the "terrorist's mystic cult of murder."<sup>(3)</sup> Tchen throws himself upon the General's car in an "extase vers le bas":

Plus de veste. De sa main droite il tenait un morceau de capot plein de boue ou de sang. Il prenait conscience de la douleur. Il souffrait de toute sa chair. Plus de poche, plus de pantalon, plus de jambe: de la chair hachée. De toute sa force, le policier le retourna d'un coup de pied dans les côtes. Tchen hurla. Il allait s'évanouir ou mourir. Il fit le plus terrible effort de sa vie, parvint à introduire dans sa bouche le canon du revolver. Prévoyant la nouvelle secousse, plus douloureuse encore que la précédente, il ne bougeait plus. Un furieux coup de talon d'un autre policier crispa tous ses muscles: il tira sans s'en apercevoir. (CH: 190-1)

Of course, Chang-Kai-Shek is not in the car, for this "hero," Tchen, must die as humiliating a death as possible in his attempt to defy fate. Irony plays an important role. Destiny again must triumph over the characters who viciously assault it. The more violent an attempt to conquer the absurd, the more agonizing is the punishment. Tchen is aware of his demolished body, and is extremely cognizant of his pain. It is even more ironic that Tchen's final "suicide" is accidental: in that sense, he fails too. His story is similar to Grabot's: we see both of them as conquerors reduced to grievous torment. Tchen dies alone in a death brought about by himself. His is a violent death, fulfilling the destiny which he established for himself the day he

committed murder, and became fascinated with the spilled blood.<sup>(4)</sup>

The greatest force of Revolution is not hate but hope.<sup>(5)</sup> Tchen is an anti-hero who fails because he is unable to sustain hope. Without hatred, Tchen cannot exist. He does not comprehend fraternal commitment; even in his efforts to form the symbolic human chain, Tchen is but a physical link. Malraux's La Condition Humaine advocates violence when joined successfully to social and political revolution. The character who is violent for erroneous motives, will suffer and die alone. He will neither possess himself nor leave his mark on the face of the earth. Malraux condones only the violence which communes with the united effort against the weight of destiny: humiliation, torture, denial of liberty, and death.

There are other characters who use violence incorrectly, who are ineffectual in the face of destiny, because they feel that as "bourreaux" they have a greater chance to dominate their fate than as "victimes." Kónig, Chang-Kai-Shek's chief of police, is an extension of Nicolaïeff, of Les Conquérants. It is interesting that those who are the most cowardly choose to be on the side of those who deal out punishment, the side of the executioners. Kónig had lost all his dignity in the Siberian prison camps, and had no patience for those men who retained any of theirs. Kónig's greatest desire was to break all men - to humiliate them to the point that they ceased possessing the one quality he was hungry for: self-esteem:

Ils m'ont giflé à coups de poing, jusqu'à  
 ce que je tombe. Ils m'ont enfoncé un clou  
 dans chaque épaule. Long comme un doigt.  
 J'ai pleuré comme une femme, comme un veau.  
 J'ai pleuré devant eux. (CH: 216-7)

Since König had succumbed to the overwhelming forces of the absurd, he expected, demanded that all others do the same. He would use any means possible to obtain the same sacrifice required of him. He has joined the Central Chinese Party for the major purpose of killing its enemies; he feels obliged to humble them first.

There is one other character governed by the desire to possess himself, and to dominate others through his violent assaults on their ego: Ferral.<sup>(6)</sup> Ferral endeavors to escape man's fate via eroticism. When he imposes eroticism upon others, he feels he can possess himself, and become all-powerful. There is much which links Perken to Ferral; perhaps, in a sense, Perken is the more developed character, as there is room in his personality for the friendship of Claude. Ferral has no friends.

When Malraux spoke of Laclos' Les Liaisons Dangereuses, he defined eroticism as constraint mixed with physical love. Ferral enjoys dominating and humiliating others:

Ces instruments nécessaires au perversi  
 qui manie et brutalise sa victime comme un  
 objet, l'amant de Malraux les utilise dans  
 la mesure où il se veut lui-même et où il  
 se fait instrument d'un plaisir dont il  
 reste maître et qu'il inflige comme une ven-  
 geance, un sarcasme, ou une preuve, à une  
 femme déshabillée de ses qualités humaines  
 et réduite à l'état de simple chose. (7)

Ferral is haunted by the pleasure the woman experiences in the sexual act; he is jealous of it. As discussed by Ling and A. D. in La Tentation de l'Occident, as unsuccessfully experienced by

Perken in La Voie Royale, Ferral too wants to be himself and the other. He would agree with Perken in that the partner remain anonymous, that she simply be the other sex, a depersonalized object. She must, however, consent to being victimized or subjugated. Ferral's refusal to see in his partner, Valérie, the existence of another human consciousness, will lead to violence, for a thinking party will not remain constrained for long.

Ferral's position in Shanghai is one of power and prestige. As President of the French Chamber of Commerce, his opportunities for employing political force are great. Ferral, however, like Garine, dreams of a triumphal return to the continent: "Là, était le pouvoir." (CH: 73) He searches for the maximum possibility to repress and direct others. He achieves this, to an extent, in his rapport with Valérie, his mistress. He watches her in their love-making, to see the full extent of her pleasure, as her features transform, dominated by her enjoyment. He needs to know her sensations, to be her and himself. Their sexual relationship is a perverted, sadistic one - he craves to use her for his own self-possession. In his domination of her, he becomes intoxicated with his illusory power over her, and he feels that, for a time at least, he is responsible for her destiny: his will manipulates her: "The exercise of power acts then as a drug that gives man the illusion that he is free from the action of destiny, that there are no limits to what he can do to satisfy his desires."<sup>(8)</sup> However, he is wrong to think that he can transcend himself; he forgets that he is not dealing with an animal, but with a human mentality, whose

will prove to be as strong as his.

Ferral is doomed to fail sexually as he is about to fail financially. The threat of impotence strikes on two planes: firstly, he is dependent upon the failure of the Communist rebellion which will insure his kill on rubber speculation; secondly, Valérie has obtained her revenge on the man who must witness her every emotion during the sexual act. He goes to her with the air of a conqueror about him; he leaves, embarrassed by the black bird affair, swearing vengeance on the humiliation she obliges him to endure:

Son excitation sexuelle devenue vaine  
nourrissait sa colère, le jetait dans  
l'hypnose étouffante où le ridicule  
appelle le sang. On ne se venge vite  
que sur les corps. Clappique lui avait  
raconté l'histoire sauvage d'un chef  
afghan dont la femme était revenue, vio-  
lée par un chef voisin, avec la lettre:  
'Je te rends ta femme, elle n'est pas si  
bien qu'on le dit,' et qui, ayant pris  
le violeur, l'avait attaché devant la  
femme nue pour lui arracher les yeux, en  
lui disant: 'Tu l'as vue et méprisée, mais  
tu peux jurer que tu ne la verras plus ja-  
mais.' Il s'imagina dans la chambre de Valé-  
rie, elle attachée sur le lit, criant jus-  
qu'aux sanglots si proches des cris de plai-  
sir, ligotée, se tordant sous la possession  
de la souffrance, puisqu'elle ne le faisait  
pas sous une autre...(CH: 177)

Once more the violence of rape and blinding enter the works of Malraux. Ferral takes pleasure in the scene of his imagination for it will place him in the position to humiliate Valérie, to dominate her, and witness her pain bordering on masochistic pleasure. Ferral's sadistic use of violence is his way to become an agent of destiny, instead of having to submit to it. He joins the

"bourreaux" and keeps Valérie a "victime." These are the only two categories of characters in the Malraucian world of the anti-hero.

In his revenge on Valérie, his hate obsesses him to the point where he must destroy all evidence of her presence; if she were there, he certainly would have been able to kill her, for she gravely wounded his dignity. To compensate for his hurt self-esteem, he must immediately sleep with a woman, possessing her and dominating her to erase his failure with Valérie. As do all the characters inevitably, Ferral passes by Gisors to speak of women and their role in a world ruled by men. Gisors speaks of the punishment of an unfaithful wife under the first Chinese empires, and examines the intense satisfaction felt by Ferral:

Eh bien, il y en avait plusieurs. Le principal, semble-t-il, consistant à les attacher sur un radeau, mains et poignets coupés, yeux crevés, je crois, et à les laisser descendre le long de ces interminables fleuves, jusqu'à ce qu'elles meurent de faim ou d'épuisement, leur amant attaché à côté d'elles sur le même radeau...  
(CH: 183-4)

Ferral expresses faith only in his acts; however, his acts involve repression and possession. Gisors claims that men of this nature cannot truly conquer, nor can anyone for that matter. To Ferral, a woman is an intoxicant, a dream, an enemy, anything but a person. She brings him closer to himself, and simultaneously, removes from him all chance of self-possession; hence, his frustrations and his desire to wound the dignity of his victim, indirectly causing pain to himself. Wherever sadism is present, masochism cannot be far away.

Ferral's response to Valérie's challenge to his masculine domination is to take a courtesan to bed. He humiliates her by refusing to allow her to entertain him first in the arts in which she is skilled. He could have had an ordinary prostitute, but he was out for total revenge. In effect, his conclusion is the same as Perken's - he is sleeping with himself, and even then, he still is unable to understand or possess either himself or his victim, for in eroticism there is no love; without love, there is no sharing of either anguish or pleasure.

Ferral neither conquers sexually nor in his financial dealings. He heads home towards France like Garine, a defeated man. Garine, at least, has somewhat scarred the map; Ferral, in his egotistical wish for self-possession, fails to defy the absurd in any way. He is alone and penniless. He is additional proof that erotic violence will not succeed in the Malraucian conquest of death and the absurd.

There are also characters who refuse violence, escaping from it through the use of drugs, gambling, and mythomania. Their lives, too, are empty and meaningless, for they have rejected the tension necessary to prove that man exists. They avoid man's fate by trying to escape his condition of anguish; at the end, they fail, and are alone, void of human fraternity, obliged to continue living a lie or pumping drugs into their systems. The first character is Clappique. Clappique is a remnant from the days of the "farfelu" writings. His creation was inspired by a genuine Parisian journalist by the name of René Guetta. He is reminiscent of Death in Lunes, in his attire and in his speech. When faced

with responsibility, he runs from it, into his world of the mythomaniac, happy to dream, content with denying existence.

Instead of warning the insurgents of impending disaster, Clappique gambles. The roulette ball is his destiny as well as that of Kyo, the leader of the insurgents. For the first time, Clappique sees himself as both the will to exist, and the will to die: "Grâce à elle (la boule), il assouvissait ensemble, pour la première fois, les deux Clappique qui le formaient, celui qui voulait vivre et celui qui voulait être détruit." (CH: 196) His desire to possess himself leads him astray; inadvertently, he "plays" Kyo's life, knowing ahead of time that he would lose: "Il savait qu'il livrait Kyo; c'était Kyo qui était enchaîné à cette boule, à cette table, et c'était lui, Clappique, qui était cette boule maîtresse de tous et de lui-même[.]" (CH: 198) Incapable of authentic actions, Clappique substitutes the fantasy of gambling for real life, risking, however, the lives of several characters. His mythomania leads him to tell a prostitute that he will commit suicide, so that she will be gentle with him, for his "last" time. He does this instead of warning Kyo of the danger to his life. He weakly endeavors to free Kyo after he is captured by König's men, but the attempt is more to assuage his conscience than anything else. Finally, Clappique has his golden opportunity to make his mythomania work for him: he will play the role of a sailor and escape from China, before he too is captured. He and Ferral, two cowards, one afraid of violence and life, one using

violence unjustly, will be shipmates back to France, proving the absurdity of man's condition: all who deserve to die, live; all who deserve to live, die.

Gisors is all thought and no action. Gisors may have been inspired by André Gide, Malraux's friend and mentor. Gisors is the novel's exponent of Oriental philosophy: the symbol of man who escapes into contemplation, who detaches himself from the world, and loses himself to the Whole. Gisors is Kyo's father, and the two are examples of the opposite poles of Oriental thought. Kyo is young and has awakened to the individual needs of the Chinese people; Gisors is still a believer of Eastern indoctrinations, somewhat similar to Tcheng-Dai of Les Conquérants. Although responsible for motivating the young to Revolution, he will have no part in it, hiding behind his opium pipe and living through his son. He knows how difficult it is to live with man's condition, and that is why he endeavors to escape it: "Il faut toujours s'intoxiquer: ce pays a l'opium, l'Islam le haschich, l'Occident la femme... Peut-être l'amour est-il surtout le moyen qu'emploie l'Occidental pour s'affranchir de sa condition d'homme..." (CH: 185)

It is only when Kyo is dead that Gisors briefly stops taking opium. He does this to recall himself to life, to experience the violent pain that goes with the loss of a loved one, and the return to one's senses. He rejects a position at a University in Moscow, for Marxism only held meaning for him through Kyo. In the end, he returns to his pipe, unable to support the weight of destiny. Like Clappique, he commits a suicide without death; he kills the

taste of the real world and his participation in it: "[...]L'humanité était épaisse et lourde, lourde de chair, de sang, de souffrance, éternellement collée à elle-même comme tout ce qui meurt[...]" (CH: 274) Clappique's escapes are mythomania and gambling; Gisors chooses drugs. Both avoid violence because both are afraid of living; living would force them to defy their fate. They are incapable of facing the absurd because they are cowardly; they are afraid to challenge destiny, and are willing to run from the responsibility of fraternal combat. For this reason, Gisors finishes his life alone, as does Clappique; neither achieves dignity nor is worthy of respect.

The final group of characters are those who join their violence to the spirit of the Revolution, and who, through fraternal combat, manage to defy the absurd to some advantage. Although they are condemned to die, for death will always have the final say, they die after gaining the dignity and self-respect they long for, after destroying their humiliations, after living their "fraternité virile."

Hemmelrich is one of those characters whose soul is in limbo. He, like so many of the characters before him, Clappique, Ferral, König, and others, is an alien in the Orient looking for something - be it a fortune, escape, a place to dominate others, or dignity. Hemmelrich's search is for the latter: his past is an accumulation of miseries; he yearns to be free to act violently, but he is imprisoned by his wife and sick child. He is deprived of the one dignity he could possess - his death: "Compenser par n'importe quelle violence, par les bombes, cette vie atroce qui

l'empoisonnait depuis qu'il était né, qui empoisonnerait de même ses enfants." (CH: 146) (There was no place in the Malraucian world of the hero for a child; "the couple" was just making its début with this novel. A child represented a prison, making it difficult for the hero to break free and act as felt obliged to.) Hemmelrich's hatred is born of the knowledge that his life is not his own, that he is incapable of avenging himself upon the misfortunes that destiny has cast his way. He suffers even greater humiliation when he has to deny the terrorists refuge, for not only can't he participate, he has to refuse the terrorists a haven, to protect his wife and child.

When Hemmelrich returns to his home after running to learn of Tchen's attempt on the General, he finds the bodies of his wife and child: "La boutique avait été 'nettoyée' à la grenade, comme une tranchée. La femme était affaissée contre le comptoir, presque accroupie, la poitrine couleur de blessure. Dans un coin, un bras d'enfant. ]'Pourvu qu'ils soient morts!'" (CH: 206) Hemmelrich is initiated into the blood bath ritual by the loss of his loved ones; he is free to act, and he chooses to do so with violence. It is true that Hemmelrich's violence appears to be a personal vendetta; however, his vengeance goes out to all that which causes humiliation to all oppressed peoples, and he does join with the other Revolutionaries, for a while, in fraternal combat. Hemmelrich is caught in between: his violence is partially of a selfish nature, partially of common motivation: "Maintenant, il pouvait tuer, lui, aussi. ]La phrase: 'on arrachait les membres des condamnés avec des tenailles rougies,' montait et descendait dans

son cerveau. Il sentait qu'elle signifiait confusément qu'il devait partir, s'arracher lui aussi." (CH: 207) Hemmelrich becomes the symbol of all those who are subjugated; he is, for a moment, a superman, capable of striking at destiny in the guise of his enemy:

L'homme tirait sa baïonnette. Il n'était plus un homme, il était tout ce dont Hemmelrich avait souffert jusque-là. À l'instant où la baïonnette arrivait au-dessus de sa tête, il se releva, s'accrocha de la main droite au cou de l'homme, serra. Hemmelrich lui cogna sa tête contre le mur de toute sa force. Le Chinois sentit un corps énorme qui entrait en lui, déchirant ses intestins: la baïonnette. (CH: 223,4)

Hemmelrich is able to escape from China; he is working in a factory in Russia, and writes of the new meaning he has found in his life. He no longer lives in humiliation; work is his religious faith. He does not die because he is not completely the new Malraucian hero; those who die have totally given themselves to the Revolution, and have been victorious over fate via virile fraternity, except for the anti-heroes such as Tchen. Since Hemmelrich goes straight to Katow (one of the leaders of the insurgents) to offer his services, upon discovering the bodies of his family, he is considered, at least in part, a genuine Revolutionary. He does see beyond his violence as witnessed in his conversation with Pei. He is, therefore, not simply an anarchist or terrorist whose goal is pure destruction; he pursues dignity and the liberty necessary to add purpose to his life. Violence is a tool used by Hemmelrich which he discards when he no longer requires it. It is not an end, as it is for Tchen; it is a means to aid the Revolution, but fails when not employed in the service of fraternal combat.

Katow is the character who best exhibits virile fraternity. His supreme sacrifice at the end of the novel removes the ego from the hero, and substitutes revolutionary humanism. He combines violence and revolution in such a way that his death has meaning; he attains the highest levels of dignity and self-esteem, disposing of the humiliations which are in the employ of destiny. Katow has survived his own mortifications in Siberia, and has come out a better man, quite the contrary of König. Again, Katow is a non-Oriental fighting an Easterner's battle, achieving the goals he was unable to reach in Russia. His humanism leads him to comprehend Hemmelrich's bind, and to offer to the latter an honorable justification for his lack of action.

Katow sheds his share of blood in the fighting between the insurgents and the police: "Katow s'évanouissait, la cuisse trouée d'une tache rouge qui s'agrandissait sur le carreau[.]" (CH: 221) After his capture, he remains in the courtyard with the rest of the Communist prisoners, awaiting the unknown terror of the torture death of burning alive. Pascal's maxim is applicable to this scene; Malraux adds his thoughts on the fear of the unknown. The scene occurs at night, when flames look their most menacing against the sky. The men huddle together, sharing their suffering, thinking aloud their obsessions with the death to come: "...Ne fusillent pas, ils les foutent vivants dans la chaudière de la locomotive." (CH: 243) Avriel Goldberger makes an interesting comparison when she calls the burning alive a modern crucifixion. These men are heretics who must pay by fire for their desire to

fight the order of things.<sup>(9)</sup> We already have learned, however, that the spirit of the Revolution cannot be encompassed by the flames; even though the flesh may burn, these men still conquer destiny because they face it together, and they leave a legacy of courage for the Revolutionaries to follow.

The bravest of those facing violent death is Katow. He finds himself next to two men obsessed by burning: "Les yeux aussi, les yeux, tu comprends. Chacun des doigts, et le ventre, le ventre." (CH: 248-9) Once more, the image of violent loss of sight is described by the author. In giving his cyanide to the men, Katow proves man's grandeur, and that we can do something to combat man's destiny: we can refuse to humble ourselves before it. As he is marched off to the engine, his giant shadow is seen against the wall; he is a giant of a man showing no signs of weakness or cowardice: "[Supposons que je sois mort dans un incendie." (CH: 252) Katow has lived violently, and has accepted violent death. It is easier for him, perhaps, because he does not die alone. He is married to every Revolutionary who is about to die, and to each one who has died before him. He lives on as a symbol for the Revolutionaries to follow. Katow is a Malraucian hero in every sense of the word: he has struggled all his life for the dignity of all men, unafraid of committing himself to violent action, aware of its consequences, and conquering humiliation through virile fraternity.

Kyo makes no supreme gestures, and yet, he is the Malraucian hero "par excellence" - to this point. Kyo is not a myth; he is just a man living his life as Malraux would have a genuine conqueror live it. Kyo might have been inspired by Chou En-Lai, in

his role as head of the Shanghai worker's movement; his creation might have been based on a certain Kyo Komatsu, a young Japanese writer who lived in Paris in 1922, was a friend of Hô Chi Minh, and with whom Malraux was acquainted. "Kyo is a tragic hero in the Promethean sense of the term. The Titan was punished for aiding humanity, and Kyo, guided by his heroic sense, gives his life in the same cause."<sup>(10)</sup> Kyo's punishment for defying the absurd is his eventual death. However, the fact that he can choose his death, and that he does not die alone, enables him to be victorious over the absurd. "Neither (Kyo nor Katow) is a case of exacerbated individualism seeking in action the relief of a private anguish."<sup>(11)</sup> This again, separates Kyo from characters like Tchen. His motives are clearly humanitarian; he has a genuine desire to see the misery of the poor eliminated. He wants every man to cease enduring degradation, and to share the privilege of self-respect heretofore granted only to the élite of Oriental society.

Kyo is the leader of the coördination of insurrectional forces. He is devoted to revolutionary action: "[...] Désarmer partout la police et, avec les cinq cents Mauser, armer les groupes de combat avant que les soldats du train blindé gouvernemental entrassent en action." (CH: 38) Even his wife May, a doctor of German extraction, is part of Kyo's Revolution, doing her part in a clandestine hospital. (This is the first real "couple" to appear in Malraux's works, although May is less the stereotyped wife and more the strong-willed woman, ready to share her husband's destiny.) Kyo is so human that he is capable of true suffering

through love; May's infidelity causes him to feel disgraced, and he is even more humiliated because it is he who permits her her freedom. (The confession of May is not unlike Clara's confession to André of her indiscretion on the boat. Whereas André cries - according to Clara - Kyo seeks to hurt May for the pain she awakens in him.)

Although marriage is sometimes a deterrent to action, the oneness of this couple proves that to be an untruth; they live as a unit, linked against anguish and solitude, in "la plus étroite complicité." (CH: 46) Kyo has divorced the life of his father for he wants no part of the intoxicant of thought; without the action of the Revolution, the organizing of the syndicates, etc., Kyo's life would have been unsubstantial. He wants to face up to the human condition - he wants to ameliorate it: "Sa vie avait un sens: donner à chacun de ces hommes que la famine, en ce moment même, faisait mourir comme une peste lente, la possession de sa propre dignité." (CH: 55)

One of the problems Kyo faces is similar to the one encountered by Garine: Kyo and the Communists are being manipulated by Chang-Kai-Shek, and the rest of the bourgeois leaders of the Chinese Revolution. Again, it is Russia, and its policy of practical and efficacious action, which is attempting to direct the course of events in China, giving its support to the monied interests as represented by the General. Kyo senses that the Communist wing of the Chinese Central Party, the Kuomintang, is being sacrificed; he is aware that the peasants and the workers will

gain nothing.

At Han-Keou, where Kyo hopes to learn of the International's precise policies in reference to the Communists, he discovers, even as Malraux had discovered, that the International strikes bargains. (Malraux grew disenchanted with Communism when he observed first hand how it strangled the individual; he renounced it completely after the Hitler-Stalin pact.) In his talks with Vologuine, a delegate of the International in China (and a character very much like Borodine), Kyo explains the necessity of the unions, and granting power to the people. Vologuine preaches expediency, urging Kyo to compromise and join Chang-Kai-Shek, for the eventual betterment of China. He tells Kyo to stay with the General for the time of separation has not yet arrived. Moscow has ordered the Communists to give up their arms; Kyo knows now that they have been sold out. Kyo wants immediate change, feeling that the workers, peasants, and soldiers are ripe for it; it is time that they too experienced human dignity: "La Révolution avait poussé sa grosseur à son terme: il fallait maintenant qu'elle accouchât ou mourût." (CH: 121)

Since Kyo is but a man, subject to human emotions such as jealousy, he refuses to take May with him into danger out of revenge for her infidelity. However, a new definition of love materializes, and Kyo returns to lead his wife into the same danger and possible death which he faces: "Il comprenait maintenant qu'accepter d'entraîner l'être qu'on aime dans la mort est peut-être la forme totale de l'amour, celle qui ne peut pas être dépassée." (CH: 166)

Destiny attacks Kyo in the bizarre form of a roulette ball. He is captured by Chang-Kai-Shek's men, and must await his death. (May is merely knocked out; however, it is important that both are together when apprehended by peril.) In prison, Kyo sees the humiliation he has been trying so hard to combat. When a guard enters an adjacent cell with a whip to punish a madman who has been crying out, and Kyo learns that this is the eleventh time in a week that the guard has reacted in the same way, he tries to intercede. After being punished himself, after momentarily exhibiting a human sign of weakness, Kyo defies further punishment by placing his hands where the guard can strike them again; Kyo actually challenges the absurd, in this case, in the form of its agent, the torturer. He can face pain once he knows what the terror is. By daring the guard, he challenges humiliation himself. When König offers Kyo his life in exchange for information, Kyo defines dignity as the contrary of humiliation: he would rather die than live a cowardly failure as König.

Kyo faces death as he had faced life - with courage. He is unafraid, for death is not the end; there is May, and all the other Revolutionaries, to carry on the fight for liberty and dignity, to violently destroy, as he had done, all which represents humiliation and degradation. Kyo was dying with the men alongside of whom he had so nobly fought; he shared fraternally their suffering as he had shared the joys of virile combat with them. He was satisfied for this death resembled his life: "[.] Mourir est passivité, mais se tuer est acte." (CH: 246) Again, there are

occasions when suicide is honorable, and not the cowardly way out, particularly for Orientals. When he takes his cyanide, although physically he is contorted, inwardly he is at peace: "Il est facile de mourir quand on ne meurt pas seul." (CH: 247) Kyo gives meaning to his life and to his death. He will never have to play parlor politics; he will never need to seek a kingdom to conquer or a world where intensity suffices to give life meaning. Kyo has helped his brothers to defy the absurd, to overthrow the overwhelming weight of destiny, for a time. He has done this by espousing violent action. He has, however, not been ruled by this violence, but has employed it in the service of the Revolution, the only legitimate way to somewhat eradicate man's adversaries: senseless debasement, and the absurd.

The characters of La Condition Humaine summarize an era of thought, and announce a trend in literature which survives even today. They are obsessed with anguish, born with the death of God. Some of them refuse to face up to their anxieties, escaping them, through drugs, gambling, etc. These characters are "ratés," incapable of supporting their human condition, for it demands too much of them. Since confronting their fate would mean endeavoring to challenge it or change it, they opt for fleeing into a comfortable euphoria, where they never have to act. There are other characters who allow themselves to be misled. They think they can change the irremediable and ward off humiliation, by attacking and conquering the dignity of others. If they serve as fate's agents, perhaps fate will allow them to continue lying to themselves as to their powers over it. Then, there are those who try to immolate

destiny, and instead, bring an end to themselves.

There is, however, one group of characters who neither try to escape from fate nor try to fully conquer it - they comprehend that this can gain them nothing, and that they are playing into the hands of the absurd. They do what they can to remove oppressive conditions which exist around them, for if you can live in a world which is absurd, you must not accept it - you must constantly challenge it. These are the heroes; they are not afraid to act. They choose to act violently for this is the way to best achieve the metamorphosis needed to alleviate the fears which ravage their spirits. They plunge into social and political revolutionary violence for, in order to diminish the might of destiny over man, they must rid man of his humiliations, and return man to a state of dignity. Only in this manner can man lay claim to crippling the absurd. The hero also has a weapon against death: if he does not die alone, he more or less dies at peace with himself, sharing sorrow and "fraternité virile." His death has meaning, and he lives on through the work, and the revolutionary efforts of others. This is the new hero Malraux succeeds in creating. He is endowed with the capacity to combine his efforts with the efforts of others in responsible combat against all those things which endeavor to dehumanize him.

## II

Le Temps du Mépris is a much shorter novel which does not achieve the classical proportions of its predecessor. However, it returns the author to the West, enabling us to conclude that the battle against the absurd need not take place on Eastern soil alone. Le Temps du Mépris is the study of one character, Kassner, and his rapport with the tribulations of destiny. He is the first of the heroes to descend to Hell, and return from it alive. Kassner is pitted against destiny, is violently assaulted by it, both physically and mentally, but survives because of virile fraternity. Again, his revolution is that of all men against oppression, living and dying courageously for the rights that each one merits.

This novel takes us from "fraternity-in-death" to "fraternity-beyond-death," or the fraternity needed not simply to meet death boldly, but to endure each and every one of life's afflictions and trials. Kassner experiences almost all conceivable forms of human anguish; it is the thought of his brothers in combat which sustains his sanity, and the fact that he is a complete human being, fighting not just for himself, but for his family, his nation, and Humanity.

It is the time of scorn, the beginning of one of the most monstrous attempts in history, not only to kill the adversary, but to crush him, to take from him his human quality.<sup>(12)</sup> In his preface to the novel, Malraux reminds us that it is not a critique of the Nazi Party, but rather a chance to awaken in men a knowledge

of their grandeur. In analyzing Kassner's behavior in prison, Malraux gives credit to his ability to withstand physical and mental torture; if enough men of Kassner's caliber exist, the human race has hope. The novel also defends Communism, but only because at this point, it seemed to give back to the individual a certain "fertility" lacking in the sterile world of the bourgeois. (Le Temps du Mépris appeared in 1935; the pact with Hitler was signed in 1939.) Communism seemed to be the only alternative to the decadent, Western democracy, and to the developing Fascist elements spreading through the continent.

Kassner is a German Communist who finds himself a prisoner of the Nazis. Like many of the other Malraucian heroes, Kassner is of the people - a miner's son. His role is similar to one of Kyo's: he is involved in organizing syndicates and preparing strikes among the workers. He is not a believer in passive resistance. Alone in his cell, Kassner faces the greatest challenge of man: he must fight his imprisonment alone, without the assistance of his fellow combatants. His cell symbolizes everything which crushes man; it is a vacuum into which no light may penetrate, leaving Kassner to the unknown tortures of his mind and body: "La vraie menace n'était ni la douleur, ni l'assassinat, c'était l'ingéniosité sadique de ceux sur qui venait de se refermer la porte." (TM: 35) Through Kassner, we hear Malraux expound upon the role of the tormentor: "Dans tous les pays, ceux qui choisissent ce métier sont d'ordinaire ce qu'il y a de plus ignoble. Au fond de l'humiliation, comme au fond de la douleur, le bourreau a bien des chances d'être plus fort que la victime." (TM: 35)

Echoes of Nicolaïeff, König, and all the Malraucian "lâches" are present in this brief passage.

"Imprisonment and humiliation not only destroy dignity, but bring with them isolation and a consequent loss of communion."<sup>(13)</sup> Kassner has to consciously force himself to remain lucid enough so that he does not succumb to the absurd. He has to concentrate on violent thought or inflict some violent pain upon himself to keep his presence of mind; it would be so easy to lapse into folly, but it would be a great triumph for the absurd. The fear of unknown torture preys upon his mind: "Il avait fait la guerre, mais jamais il n'avait entendu un homme torturé hurler dans un lieu clos. Les blessés de la guerre gémissaient, et leurs cris n'avaient rien de commun avec celui-ci, terrifiant surtout par ce qu'il avait de mystérieux." (TM: 36-7) Torture occurs in the darkened cells; again, negative activity happens in the dark, where the imagination has the opportunity to magnify the torment to something worse than it actually is.

Finally, Kassner's turn arrives. With the appearance of the four guards, however, Kassner's fears are alleviated. The worst thing about torture is not knowing precisely what form it will take; once Kassner makes visual contact with the instruments of his torture, he is relieved: "Elle avait été l'angoisse primitive, celle de la souffrance liée à l'inconnu; et peut-être avait-il attendu surtout le sadique, l'ivrogne, le fou - l'inhumain. Ceux-là n'étaient pas ivres. Restait le sadisme." (TM: 41)

Whereas most of the violence which befalls the characters in the previous novels occurs out of the reader's vision, we wit-

ness Kassner's punishment to better understand the humiliation man suffers in the hands of the "bourreaux." The executioners are destiny, trying to whip the human element out of man, causing him to resemble the animals:

Un coup de poing dans l'estomac le plia en avant comme s'il se fût enfoncé en lui; à l'instant même où son visage s'abaissait, un autre coup au menton le rabattit à toute volée: il reçut à la fois dans les côtes le sol de ciment et les bottes qui commencèrent à le marteler. La faiblesse de la douleur l'étonna, bien qu'elle fût à la limite de l'évanouissement; auprès de la torture, de tout ce à quoi il avait pensé, être roué de coups était dérisoire. Sous un coup à la mâchoire il sentit qu'il crachait le sang. Un coup à la nuque. Il s'évanouit enfin. (TM: 42-3)

At least with torture, man has the opportunity to resist valiantly, defying the tormentors and the castigation itself. It is after, when Kassner awakens to find himself alone, that he has trouble resisting fate. It is much more difficult to fight a void than the presence of concrete danger. He does experience the same feeling that disturbed Klein: the feeling of being apart. Prison obliges man not to accept, forcing him to take a violent stand against further attempts to degrade him: "Même victorieux, il retrouverait en sortant un monde à jamais amputé; il porterait comme une cicatrice cette mort solitaire." (TM: 48) Kassner runs the risk of going mad; he is quite capable of standing firm against dangers to the flesh, but the lunacy he faces, the anguish of this abstract violence attacking his mind, is a challenge even the greatest of conquerors would find difficult to endure. He knows the importance of remaining in self-control. He has beaten the physical abuse to his body, he has battled bravely in the Revolutionary ef-

fort, and now he has to contend with being humiliated by this prison cell which insidiously pervades his brain, stifling him, causing him to release the hold he has on his will. The prison cell is, of course, another of destiny's agents, exacting retribution from a man who has questioned its role to dominate him.

Kassner is visited by a nightmare, just as Garine, his brother-in-anguish, was troubled before him: "Un vautour enfermé avec lui dans une cage, et qui lui arrachait des morceaux de chair à chaque coup de son bec en pioche, sans cesser de regarder ses yeux qu'il convoitait. Le vautour approchait, gonflé depuis des heures de tout le sang noir de l'obscurité." (TM: 53) Saturn's symbols - black blood, pieces of flesh, darkness, vultures - are ever present. Malraux still suffers the obsession of injury to the eyes. The image is Promethean, Kassner's punishment for trying to steal dignity from the ruling classes, and deliver it to the poor. Man's most dangerous enemy can often be his mind, and Kassner must strain every nerve to combat the absurd. Kassner uses music to push away the madness, to recall the sounds of joy and grief of humanity. The dual role of music in the works of Malraux is interesting: at times, it is that which prevents man from becoming insane, reminding him of the real world, and recalling anguish to him; at other times, it lulls him into a false security, enabling him to escape pain, often allowing him to be conquered by a foe. In the case of Kassner, it sharpens his senses, permitting him to be more aware of his apprehensions. The cell disappears, and Kassner can again visualize the blood of battle:

L'appel de ceux qui à cette heure peignaient le signe rouge et l'appel à la vengeance sur les maisons de leurs camarades assassinés, de ceux qui remplaçaient les noms des plaques des rues par ceux de leurs compagnons torturés, et ceux qui, à Essen, tombés sous les matraques, mous comme des étranglés, la figure dans leur sang qui coulait de la bouche et du nez parce que les S. A. voulaient leur faire chanter 'l'Internationale,' l'avaient hurlée à terre sur un ton de si sauvage espoir que le sous-officier avait saisi son revolver, tiré.  
(TM: 57-8)

The blood and violence of the Revolution, and the thought of his men united against the oppression of the enemy, is sufficient to assist Kassner in a victory over the absurd. Virile fraternity pulls Kassner out of serenity, and flings him into the heart of Revolutionary violence and life.

Just as he triumphs, his isolation is at an end, and he reestablishes communion, in the form of one of the prisoners. In making contact, Kassner benefits from true fraternal combat. He renounces passivity as he endeavors to break the code of the other prisoner; by engaging his entire person in this labor, he again strikes at the absurd: he has refused to submit to it. In addition, he thinks of his former battles with their violent images, always having as his objective, mental freedom.

He even contemplates suicide; his plan entails death by fingernail, which sounds absurd in and of itself: "Il se servirait de celui du petit doigt comme d'une plume à vaccin. Il essaya de le faire entrer dans sa chair, à la hauteur du poignet. En vain."  
(TM: 84) Actually, he lets the idea of growing the nail sustain him, for it will give a direction to his thought for several days,

again helping him to avoid succumbing to the absurd. When the guard offers him a cord, however, he recognizes that death would not be of his choosing, and he rejects it. Instead, he knocks upon the wall, hopeful of regaining human contact. With the response, Kassner beats his "fascination du néant"; the code word is "camarade." Both run a great danger, for if either were caught, "celui qui frappait serait assommé ou envoyé aux cellules où le condamné ne peut se tenir que debout." (TM: 98) The gamble is worth it, for there is no nobler conquest than that gained by men united in their struggle against humiliation.

The Nazis do catch up with the communication, and it is the newly acquired friend of Kassner who is punished: "[...]C'était tout le corps de son camarade assommé dans son cachot qui tapait contre ce mur avec le son mou de la chair où le son clair de la tête[...]" (TM: 102) Kassner remains, once again alone, devoid of hope. There comes to refresh his memory another image of violence, of the time he saw Lenin dead, and heard his widow's appeal: "Vous, mes compagnons de Chine enterrés vivants, mes amis de Russie aux yeux arrachés, mes amis d'Allemagne autour de moi avec leurs cordes, toi qu'on vient peut-être d'assommer, c'est qu'il y a entre nous que j'appelle amour." (TM: 106-7) Often, love and fraternity are born of persecution and tyranny shared by the masses. The common afflictions of the people bind them together in meaningful revolt. It is only through sufficiently irate people, angered to the degree that they willingly commit themselves to Revolution, that the days of wrath can come to an end. (One gets the eerie feeling that Malraux was able to see the future, and to comprehend that people

would refrain from participation for a long time in World War II before they would join together and attempt to rebel against being smothered by the oppressive forces of Fascism.)

Kassner is miraculously delivered from his imprisonment, although it will mark him forever. He appreciates the significance of fraternal combat when he is informed of the voluntary substitution of another man, perhaps less essential to the Revolution, in his stead. This man would most certainly be killed. Kassner leaves Germany by plane, and he and the pilot are joined in "fraternité virile," sharing the hazards of a clandestine flight, even sharing the possibility of dying.

Malraux recaptures an experience he had when going in search of the lost city of Sheba, an excursion which almost cost him his life. Kassner and the pilot fly blind: their compass does not work; they are caught in the eye of a storm, pelted by hail, surrounded by fog, and dark clouds. Nature's violence was upon them, as it had been upon Perken and Claude in La Voie Royale. After evading fate in the person of the Nazis, Kassner was not about to give up easily to destiny, as encountered in the form of nature: "A peine s'entendait-il lui-même secoué, arraché, submergé par les grêlons à la volée qui claquaient sur sa voix et faisaient sauter l'avion comme des fouets." (TM: 136) Kassner understands that the pilot was prepared to die for and with him; the sacrifice is similar to that proposed by Katow. However, Kassner is not about to die: "Déjà l'avion ayant cessé de trembler; tous ses sens étaient maintenant ramassés, de façon très précisément sexuelle[.]" (TM: 140-1) Although no greater scenes of virile

fraternity occur in the works of Malraux than the scene of Katow in the courtyard, and this scene of Kassner and the pilot (also one scene in L'Espoir), the scenes differ greatly. Katow's sacrifice is an illustration of fraternity-in-death; Kassner and the pilot exhibit fraternity-beyond-death, for they are not sharing death, they are about to be reborn together into life. Again, Malraux makes reference to sexual energy, for it is an intense form of activity, violent and all-encompassing.

When they recognized that they had survived, it was as if they had come back from Hell. They had courted death and won an extension on life. Kassner's Prague seems unreal to him, populated with those who had never seen a prison cell, or had never won a bout with death. Not only does Kassner claim victory over the absurd, but over death as well; however, neither could have been accomplished alone. His fraternal combat and memories of it saved him from destruction. Kassner seeks Anna, his wife (Kassner and Anna are the Malraucian couple "par excellence," and their child, corresponding to the birth of his own first child, tells us that Malraux's ideas on marriage and paternity began to modify at this time.) Although he cannot locate her at a meeting for German immigrants who are helped by the inhabitants of Czechoslovakia to avoid or escape the German camps and prisons, he does sense, again, the meaning of fraternity in Revolution; in fact, the following quote sums up Malraux's ideas in this area at the time he wrote Le Temps du Mépris:

Aucune parole humaine n'était aussi profonde que la cruauté, mais la fraternité virile la rejoignait jusqu'au plus profond du sang, jusqu'aux lieux interdits du coeur où sont accroupies la torture et la mort...(TM: 165)

Nothing can totally eradicate the poison spread by torturing the human soul; nothing can compensate for the humiliation a man undergoes either in prison or by simply being denied his rights as a man. The only deed that can counteract the pressure of destiny to undo the human quality of man is the organized, revolutionary combat of the masses working together to rid themselves of their common sufferance.

Kassner needs Anna and the child to become the first complete Malraucian hero. He is a family man, not an "oberman": he faces danger and death with the knowledge that he is not confronting them alone. His wife is committed to the Revolution, but she is also a woman, and a mother - the first, and only, complete Malraucian woman. (She is, most definitely, the pertrait of Josette Clotis - a woman who complemented Malraux, without animosity, lacking in the salient characteristics of the too independent and too masculine early Malraucian female personages such as Valérie and May.)

Although Kassner is practically the only character of the novel, he is described in depth, and we do recognize in him traits of the Malraucian hero. He is placed in a situation which forces him to do battle courageously with the absurd; he struggles on physical, emotional, and mental levels to wipe out the images of prison rotting his body and soul. His best victories over the

absurd occur when he combats it in harmony with other tortured and tormented souls. Kassner is obliged to use violence or to think of it, for the status quo cannot change when nothing is done to disturb it. Kassner sees the days of wrath as a challenge to every man whose sanity hinges upon his freedom and dignity. Kassner is capable of any intense action to relieve the dread of dark, quiet solitude, which does more damage to a man than a severe beating. In prison, Kassner's options are limited, but Malraux teaches us that no matter how debased is man's condition, he is required to remedy it, with any possible means. Violence is chosen (as it finally was in World War II, by the forces opposed to the Nazi takeover), to dispose most efficiently of everything which humbles man. Anna knows her husband must go back again to Germany, for his mission has not terminated. She knows and accepts, because no Malraucian hero rests until he feels that he has eliminated the ills of the world. It is the task of the hero to rid the world of Evil. Malraux sees him fulfilling this task through violent, fraternal revolutionary combat.

\* \* \* \* \*

Even though Le Temps du Mépris does not seem to have as much impact as La Condition Humaine, it does correspond to the evolution of the author's thoughts. La Condition Humaine deals with anti-heroes as well as genuine heroes; Le Temps du Mépris takes Kyo and Katow and carries them one step further, giving us the portrait of a whole man, Kassner, totally void of ego and

revenge, functioning in a Western world where he belongs, experiencing anguish and dealing with it in a rational, heroic way. Both novels take the heroes out of themselves, and place them in the world of Revolution where they must engage themselves totally, or fail in their endeavors to win dignity for mankind. Revolution is the battleground for the Malraucian hero, who is no longer interested in solving a personal crisis, but in liberating all men from hated oppression. These novels no longer concern themselves with the individual and his need for violence to prove to himself that he exists, and to scar the map to insure that he will continue existing. The authentic Malraucian hero leaves a scar on the map by engendering the spirit of Revolution in all men around him, and in all the men to follow. His immortality is reached through fraternal combat, where he is given the opportunity to avenge himself upon the absurd and death, and where he is often successful, although not always so. He is a man capable of love, particularly fraternal love, and a sharing of both pleasure and sorrow unknown to the early Malraucian heroes. He is a product of the marriage of violence, and social and political Revolution by a united front, actively and intensively conquering misery, and all forms of power sustaining the days of wrath. He is the new humanism, bringing hope to the world, that once it is purged of its tyranny, man can again find the dignity which gives his life meaning.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Cecil Jenkins, André Malraux, p.64.
- <sup>2</sup>Clara Malraux, Les Combats et les Jeux, pp.177-81.
- <sup>3</sup>Gerda Blumenthal, André Malraux: The Conquest of Dread, pp.31-2.
- <sup>4</sup>Loc. cit: "In his self-inflicted, violent death the wedding of inner and outer darkness is actually consummated in blood. He appoints himself to avenge his outraged purity in a murder that is to be simultaneously a self-immolation and a hate saturated and frenzied conquest."
- <sup>5</sup>Gaëton Picon, André Malraux, p.30.
- <sup>6</sup>According to the New Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language, "ferus" is a Latin word meaning wild, cruel, fierce. The choice of "Ferral" is not coincidental; it is deliberate.
- <sup>7</sup>Claude Mauriac, Malraux ou le Mal du Héros, p.71.
- <sup>8</sup>Charles Blend, André Malraux: Tragic Humanist, p.97.
- <sup>9</sup>Avriel Goldberger, Visions of a New Hero: the heroic life according to André Malraux, p.194.
- <sup>10</sup>Blend, op. cit., p.66.
- <sup>11</sup>W. M. Frohock, "The Power and the Glory," R. W. B. Lewis' Malraux: A Collection of Critical Essays, p.57.
- <sup>12</sup>Pol Gaillard, Les critiques de notre temps et Malraux, p.91.
- <sup>13</sup>Blend, op. cit., p.104.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FAILURE OF VIOLENCE AND THE REVOLUTION

- I. Violence is humbled: the Revolution is incapable of conquering destiny: L'Espoir
  1. The last anarchists: Le Négus, Puig
  2. From the mercenaries to the disillusioned to the intellectuals: Leclerc, Captain Hernandez; Alvear vs. Scali, Garcia
  3. Effectual Communists and other "engagés": Manuel, Ramos, Attignies, Ximénès
  4. Revolutionary humanism: Magnin: "la maladie des chefs"
- II. The triumph of fundamental man: the supreme defiance of destiny via art: Les Noyers de l'Altenburg

"Fraternity may mobilize a people, but it cannot save them from extinction, since it is basically an emotion or state of soul." (1)

L'Espoir is the apocalypse of virile fraternity and also its crucial deflation." (2)

The Walnut Trees of Altenburg is a tragedy in four acts, all the scenes taking place on a blasted heath; and though the scene changes from Chartres to Altenburg, to the Vistula and some abandoned corner of Flanders, they are all places of devastation and horror. There remains only the vision of the walnut trees..." (3)

Malraux's last two novels are set in the West. This time, his novels deal with actions in which he was directly involved. His knowledge of first hand combat taught him that man can gain much from virile fraternity; however, he also witnessed the failure of the Revolution to destroy death, anguish and the absurd. It is true that when men do battle together for a common cause, they succeed in establishing for themselves certain values, such as liberty, dignity, and fraternity. Their revolutionary effort, however, does not liberate them from death and destiny: they remain prisoners of the abyss. Their action is potentially in vain; however, Revolution does give man the possibility of attaining dignity; each individual must then make dignity his own conquest. Collective action provides man with the framework for his immortality, placing him in contact with other men seeking liberty and dignity, wanting to experience fraternity, adding meaning to an anguish-filled existence: permitting the individual the opportunity to manifest the best part of himself in the collective struggle. At this point, it is up to the individual to repossess the faculties he has to transform and metamorphose himself and the world, to create his immortality, in whatsoever manner he may choose.

In L'Espoir, Malraux chooses to take us through every potential revolutionary, beginning again with the most elementary participant. In this longest of novels, we are permitted a panorama of all men who engage in Revolution - whatever their motives might be. We see before us anti-heroes and heroes of the novels past, plus we see a new hero, Magnin, who is perhaps the first Malraucian hero to remove himself from the glorified pedestal

known as the Revolution. We left Malraux's last hero Kassner on a very positive note; Magnin is our introduction to the world at war, and some of the not-so-pleasant aspects, and not-so-glamorous facts of Revolution.

Our descent is rapid as we plunge into the Hell of three wars - beginning with L'Espoir, continuing on through Les Noyers de l'Altenburg. However, deception with Revolution is to be replaced by new, affirmative values in this last of the Malraucian novels. The path is an interesting one to follow; the resolution to the initial problem (how to combat and conquer death and the absurd) posed by Malraux, may not be fully satisfying to all his readers. We must, however, give him credit for attempting a solution, in a world "blessed" with more critics than remedies.

## I

"L'Espoir manifeste également l'insuffisance de l'effort révolutionnaire. La révolution par elle-même ne résout pas le drame de l'existence humaine, ne change pas la condition métaphysique de l'homme."<sup>(4)</sup> Malraux does not yet renounce violence and the Revolution; the story of L'Espoir is still concerned with the combined efforts of the oppressed to violently overthrow the forces which subjugate them. L'Espoir shows men of totally different orientations teaming together (no longer dissension amongst the Revolutionaries), confronting a common enemy, Fascism. It is interesting that Malraux's acts of violence no longer occur in the dark or at night; the Spanish Republicans, anarchists, socialists and Commu-

nists face danger openly, directly, and without fear, in the daylight. The fascination with terror, and the obsession of the unknown is replaced by men confronting real, tangible dangers face to face with their enemies. Malraux turns away from the Hero in his battle against Destiny, and towards "man in situation,"<sup>(5)</sup> fighting alongside other men. It is now a question of the absurdity of their combat, since they cannot rid the world of death and anguish, as they must constantly engage in battle to preserve the values which they are always in danger of losing. It takes Malraux a while, however, before he totally rejects the role of Revolution and violence as a panacea for the ills of the world, for he needs to replace one cure-all with another. For this reason, L'Espoir still exalts the virtues of virile fraternity, dignity, liberty, and Revolution. However, the glory allied with dying "le plus haut possible," is replaced by disgust and pain that the cosmos continues to be indifferent to man, no matter how he tries to improve his lot. Death will always persecute man; and so, he is obliged to discover a means to perpetuate himself despite destiny's defeat of him. Violence and Revolution help impede destiny, but can never hope to conquer it.

Les grandes manoeuvres sanglantes du monde étaient commencées. Pour la première fois, libéraux, hommes de l'U.G.T. et de la C.N.T., anarchistes, républicains, syndicalistes, socialistes, couraient ensemble vers les mitrailleuses ennemies. Anarchistes, communistes, socialistes, républicains, comme l'inépuisable grondement de ces avions mêlait bien ces sangs qui s'étaient crus adversaires, au fond fraternel de la mort!...  
(E: lll, 29, 340-1)

In the first part of L'Espoir entitled "l'illusion Lyrique," Malraux introduces a host of characters from several countries, and from varied backgrounds. These characters unite against the Fascist government which has seized power in Spain. These men, including the anarchists (who are not the terrorists of the previous novels for they do achieve a tentative escape from solitude), do engage in bloody combat throughout Spain, mixing their blood with the flames of a bombed-out ravaged country.

Le Négus and Puig are anarchists; le Négus had been in prison for five years. His is the story of the humiliated characters before him, e.g. - Klein (Les Conquérants), Kassner (Le Temps du Mépris): a struggle to prevent a return to prison, so as never to again suffer humiliation. His fight is in Barcelona where he and his men attack Fascists, and obtain their arms. Le Négus likes to destroy through acts of irreparable violence, and has more of Hong (Les Conquérants) or pure terrorist in him than has Puig: "une nuit, le Négus, aidé d'une dizaine de copains, a mis le feu aux trams en dépôt sur la colline du Tibidabo, et les a lancé en flammes, freins desserrés, au milieu des klaxons épouvantés des autos, jusqu'au centre de Barcelone." (E: 23) He enjoys operating the machine gun which will kill Fascists. He also faces death by flame thrower. (Echoes of burning alive in the steam engines of La Condition Humaine are present, as well as an overall obsession with fire and flames that goes back to the Fireman of Massacre.) He could have been killed: "Ça doit être difficile, brûler vif un homme qui vous regarde..." (E: 133) His life is wedded to anarchy and violence: "Il se réfugie toujours dans la violence ou dans le sacrifice; les

deux à la fois, c'est mieux encore." (E: 410) (This is the last novel in which a character who is all action and no thought - anarchist-terrorist - is to make an appearance. Malraux's remaining "heroes" will be obliged to espouse thought and action, creating for themselves the possibility of extending their lives through an expression of their ideas, rather than through their deeds.)

Puig works with le Négus, but is less interested in destruction than in doing some good for the people of Spain. He has previously helped the people of Saragossa; he is more committed to constructive action than is le Négus, although he has no patience with corruption and passivity. He is appalled at the lack of commitment on the part of the Church: "Des églises où on a approuvé les trente mille arrestations, les tortures et le reste, qu'elles brûlent, c'est bien." (E: 39) Puig is capable of self-sacrifice, for he knows that he is a servant to a greater cause: "Le Négus entendit un coup isolé et vit Puig se dresser d'un coup, appuyer ses deux poings sur le volant comme sur une table, avec le cri de l'homme à qui une balle vient de casser les dents." (E: 40) As majestic as is his sacrifice, he still dies, granting another victory to death, the same payment exacted with the deaths of Klein (Les Conquérants), Perken (La Voie Royale), Kyo, Katow, Tchen (La Condition Humaine), etc. Malraux began to realize that challenging destiny via violent action is noble, but is also tragic, for every man, no matter how great is his defiance, is inevitably doomed to perish.

There are other characters from all over the world fighting the battle of the Spanish people. There are mercenaries

such as Leclerc, a Frenchman in aviation, who fails to come to the aid of some of the other resistance fliers, and is responsible for their deaths. Since he cannot face his responsibility, he runs from it in drink. He is a vestige of the Clappique-Gisors characterization which played such an important role in La Condition Humaine, although he is somewhat superior to them, since he has bothered to make an initial commitment. He is sent away, for a Revolution cannot be successful if the people engaged in it are only committed to the cause for financial reasons, or if they refuse total communion with the other combatants.

Certain characters do not share the kindred spirit of fraternity. They have become disenchanted with the violence of the Revolution around them. They see the victory of death over man, and allow themselves to be led to the slaughter. They are tired of fighting, and find giving in much easier. One such character is Captain Hernandez. He organizes the Resistance in Toledo, but is disgusted by the images of blood, death, and mutilation around him:

L'avant-corps du bâtiment fasciste éclata comme s'il eût été miné; le sang sembla jaillir de la tête d'un milicien qui s'effondra à droite de Garcia, la main qui avait lancé la dynamite encore en l'air. À dix mètres au-dessous, une femme, la tête aux cheveux bouclés dans le creux du bras, l'autre bras étendu (mais la tête vers le bas du ravin), eût semblé dormir si on ne l'eût sentie, sous sa robe vide, plus plate qu'aucun être vivant, collée à terre avec la force des cadavres; et ces fantômes du soleil flamboyant n'étaient des morts que par leur odeur. (E: 130)

In his discussions with Lieutenant Moreno, who has escaped from Fascist imprisonment, Captain Hernandez learns that a man is changed

in captivity: "En prison, j'ai vu tout ce qu'on peut voir, entendu les types jouer leur vie à pile ou face, attendu le dimanche parce qu'on ne fusille pas le dimanche. J'ai vu des types jouer à la pelote basque sur le mur où étaient encore les morceaux de cervelle et les cheveux des prisonniers." (E: 362) These are no longer conquering images of death and violence; these images include man's ultimate hardening and indifference to violence, a tragedy often worse than violence itself. The two converse of death and the irremediable (as action abates, colloquy intensifies proportionately): death can be accepted if one dies in possession of one's liberty and dignity; it is an outrage if it follows torture or humiliation, for there is no chance to repair the damage. As Hernandez' men flee before the onslaught of the Fascists, Hernandez stands firm, protecting his men that they may reach positions of safety, while he remains in the Fascist line of fire: "Il sauta enfin, reçut un bizarre coup de fouet au-dessus de l'oeil et sentit que le sang l'aveuglait. Un autre coup sur la nuque[.]" (E: 245)

Hernandez is no coward; it is that he is more oriented to "being" than to "doing." He is gesture conscious as is exemplified by his desire to ward off the enemy by himself, and also by his granting a wish to a Fascist Captain, Moscardo. He is interested more in dying "well," than in living, or trying his luck at an escape. In the Toledo prison courtyard, he meditates on his discourse with Moreno:

Moreno: - La chose capitale de la mort, c'est qu'elle rend irrémédiable ce qui l'a précédée, irrémédiable à jamais; la torture, le viol, suivis de la mort,

ça c'est vraiment terrible.  
 Hernandez: - [.]La...tragedie de la mort  
 est en ceci qu'elle transforme  
 la vie en destin, qu'à partir  
 d'elle rien ne peut plus être  
 compensé. (E: 249)

Hernandez actually summarizes Malraux's thought. Until the writing of this novel, Malraux had not really been directly involved in Revolutionary action. True, he helped agitate the Annamites, but the action in which he took part, was far from an organized people's revolt against its oppressors. He was younger, and the action he did see, was colorful and glamorous. He did not witness the Chinese uprising at all. It was only with the Spanish Civil War that Malraux witnessed the shedding of so much blood that he was less favorably impressed with violence than before. "Hernandez attendait d'être exécuté. Il en avait assez. Par-dessus la tête." (E: 247) Hernandez echoes Malraux who finally comprehends that violence used to combat the absurd actually breeds more violence, which leads to death.

Hernandez does not attempt to escape; he is tired of living in constant view of violence, Revolution, and death. He is executed by a firing squad, reminiscent of Goya's "El Dos de Mayo," and foreshadowing the author's own mock execution during World War II:

Tous mourront. Sauf ces Maures qui conduisent  
 les condamnés: les tueurs sont hors de la vie  
 et de la mort. L'homme accroupi au bord de la  
 fosse suit du canon de son revolver quelque  
 chose qui bouge, et tire; imaginer le coup de  
 grâce dans une tête insensible ne vaut pas  
 mieux que de l'imaginer dans une tête mourante. [.]  
 Décharge. Deux tombent dans la fosse, un en  
 avant. On s'habitue à droite à tuer, à gauche,  
 à être tué. (E: 252, 254, 256)

The Revolution is no longer the magnificent world of the Hero and his brave struggle against Destiny; it is the struggle of the ordinary man to "transformer en conscience une expérience aussi large que possible," before succumbing to death. (E: 388-9) Hernandez represents the dilemma of man who endeavors to do his part to ameliorate the world, and yet, when his action is over, he sees no more purpose in continuing the battle. (There is something of Perken - defeatism - in him.)

There are several intellectuals engaged in battle for the first time. There are also those who refuse action, and insist on escaping the world of violence by replacing it with the world of ideas. (Malraux concludes that although the presence of the intellectual in the revolutionary effort is beneficial both to the intellectual and to the other combatants, the Revolution is always won by the people themselves.) Unamuno, a great writer and supporter of the Fascists, objected to violence on ethical grounds. For his pacifism, he was repaid by losing his post as rector of the University, and by having all his possessions taken from him. He saw in Fascism only what he wanted to see; when he recognized the extent to which the Fascists had gone, it was too late. Many people pretended not to see what they did not wish to recognize as truth, in both the Spanish Civil War and World War II to follow.

Most of the other intellectuals do not try to escape into the soothing world of thought; they know that perhaps action is not the remedy for what ails Spain, but they also know that to take no action at all is to concede to the absurd. Guernico is a

writer who organizes an ambulance service in Madrid so that he can feel that he is taking an active part in the revolutionary effort. Lopez is a sculptor who tries to engage himself in battle, leading the socialist militants. Alvear, a professor of art history, and father of Jaime - another socialist militant who is blinded in a bombing mission - is much like Gisors of La Condition Humaine. He is old, and refuses evacuation because he does not wish to leave his world of books. He is not a participant in the Revolution, and is told by another intellectual how relatively unimportant his world of art is, in comparison with the fraternal "engagement" happening around him. Scali, an Italian professor, is his instructor. Scali wishes to convince Alvear that his world is unreal with regard to the pain and anguish around him: "La mort n'est pas une chose si sérieuse: la douleur, oui. L'art est peu de chose en face de la douleur, et, malheureusement, aucun tableau ne tient en face de taches de sang." (E: 316) (Malraux would modify his strong put-down of art before too long, after realizing that it would be the next logical choice in the active combat of the absurd, and that it would not be responsible for causing death, as was violence.) Scali opposes the escape projected by Alvear, and offers in substitution a meaningful way for Alvear to elude solitude via fraternal commitment: "[Les hommes unis à la fois par l'espoir et par l'action accèdent, comme les hommes unis par l'amour, à des domaines auxquels ils n'accéderaient pas seuls. L'ensemble de cette escadrille est plus noble que presque tous ceux qui la compose." (E: 319) Fraternity may ennoble man, but, unfortunately, it does not render his fundamental drama any better.

Malraux's dichotomy of art versus Revolution is far from being resolved.

Garcia is another intellectual engaged in mapping out the spots to bomb in Madrid, convoking reporters, and showing them Fascist circulars where all forms of atrocities are advocated:

Une femme portait une petite fille à peine âgée de deux ans à laquelle manquait la mâchoire inférieure. Mais la petite fille vivait encore, les yeux grands ouverts, elle semblait demander avec étonnement qui lui avait fait cela. Une femme traversa la rue - l'enfant dans ses bras n'avait plus de tête..." (E: 368)

Scali and Garcia talk of the conflict between ethics and action. Garcia knows the problem must exist by definition, but man does not have the right not to act because of it: "(Scali): [.] Pour moi, je ne suis pas dans cet uniforme parce que j'attends du Front populaire le gouvernement des plus nobles, je suis dans cet uniforme parce que je veux que changent les conditions de vie des paysans espagnols." (E: 389) Scali participates in the Revolution because it is his duty, as a sensitive, thinking man, to combat effectively for the freedom and dignity of all men, and in so doing, to assure his own conquest of these values. Garcia fights because it is essential to conquer, even though man's condition will remain basically tragic:

Pour un homme qui pense, la révolution est tragique. Mais pour un tel homme, la vie aussi est tragique. Et si c'est pour supprimer sa tragédie qu'il compte sur la révolution, il pense de travers, c'est tout[.] Il n'y a pas cinquante manières de combat, il n'y en a qu'une, c'est d'être vainqueur. (E: 390)

The intellectuals act because they are obliged to make their presence and their spirit count. The values they cherish can only be safeguarded by active protection. They are as responsible for the restoration of hope to the people as are the rest of the combatants. The intellectuals join with the anarchists, socialists, Communists and Republicans. They, perhaps even more than the others, appreciate the values for which they fight, since they are the ones who have always enjoyed liberty of body and spirit, and would know what existence would be like if it were to be lived under oppressive Fascism. They do not enjoy violence or pursue it as many of the previous Malraucian heroes do; they have to turn to it as a last resort against the crushing weight of Franco's forces. It is with melancholy that they use violence, for they know that the price of every violent act is the loss of a life or a mutilation. The only saving factor is the quiet joy of combining with all classes of men, and the ability to teach the masses of the necessity of a positive outcome. Man can attain his greatest heights after the maturing experience of an encounter with the whole.

Of the other groups who associate themselves with the action against the Fascists, the most striking, perhaps, is that of the Police. Colonel Ximénès represents the Civil Guard. He does not join the insurrection of the Fascists because he has taken an oath to serve the government. Despite the war going on around him, despite the toleration on the part of the Church of the oppression of the masses, Ximénès is a religious man, who takes time out to pray. Ximénès needs God, for he is alone. He cannot fully share

virile fraternity because he suffers from "la maladie des chefs." Ximénès fights the Fascists for they refuse to stop the injustices they perpetrate against the people of Spain. He is a non-violent man using violence to save as many lives as possible: "É. Dépendre le plus possible de fer et d'explosif pour dépenser le moins possible de chair vivante." (E: 171)

Ramos and Manuel are Communists leading the anti-Fascist action in the Sierra. Ramos had been an anarchist, but has espoused Communism, because he has grown old, and political formation has become more vital to him than the games of the anarchists. Working with them is Barca, a man who had remained neutral until he realized that he did not wish to respect the Fascists, the men responsible for taking his land from him. He has also become militant because of wanting to share the struggle with all others who have been dehumanized by Fascist enslavement: "Le contraire de l'humiliation mon gars, c'est pas l'égalité, c'est la fraternité." (E: 206) Malraux's heroes continue to struggle forcefully to secure the same values as their predecessors of the Orient. A delineation is drawn between characters such as Ramos and Manuel, and others of the nature of Puig and le Négus: "Les communistes veulent faire quelque chose. Vous et les anarchistes, pour des raisons différentes, vous voulez être quelque chose." (E: 212) Ramos, Manuel and the others build a stronghold for Communism in Spain, for the future (they do, however, differ from Borodine, Les Conquérants, and Vologuine, La Condition Humaine; they do not preach expediency - they practice immediate amelioration of the conditions of all men.)

The anarchists do not really wish "to do;" they wish "to be," and the future does not concern them in the least. Their interest is to die "le plus haut possible," and to make no compromises with their values. Ramos and Manuel have a difficult task: Russia sends little aid to the Spanish Revolutionary effort; members of the Party throw their badges away in disgust. They fight for all the concepts the Communist doctrines have preached, and yet, the motherland sends nothing to assist them. (The year is 1939, the beginning of the end of Malraux's flirtation with Communism.) Manuel commands his men anyway, taking charge of them, organizing them into one great fraternal action with the purpose of defending the Republic.

Manuel suffers "la maladie des chefs" as does Ximénès. Raised strictly on strong doses of responsible fraternity, Manuel becomes apart from his men when he finds it necessary to shoot those who have turned coward; he learns that to prevent full-scale tragedy, a mild dose of it is required. However, after setting an example, Manuel is successful in that several of the deserters return. It is, of course, ironic that Manuel must use death as an instrument to secure the service of his men. Eventually, a few planes do arrive from Russia, but the whole experience must have been extremely distasteful for Malraux, and embarrassing and disappointing to all Communists in Spain. (Malraux was also unable to contend with a Party discipline which sent men back to Russia supposedly for treasonable acts, who had come to Spain, willingly, to support the fight of the Spanish people.)

Music reveals life to Manuel, who is so surrounded by death that he enjoys a brief moment of peace listening to recordings. As Kassner (Le Temps du Mépris) is able to recall the past through musical images of pain and joy, Manuel hears victory for man in music: "Manuel entendait pour la première fois la voix de ce qui est plus grave que le sang des hommes, plus inquiétant que leur présence sur la terre: - la possibilité infinie de leur destin..." (E: 498) Never again will music represent "divertissement" and escape; it belongs to the world of that which is capable of drawing man away from death, thrusting him back into life with its past, present and future filled with hope. Manuel does not think of Communism at the end of the novel, but of the capacity of the arts to perpetuate man, to show him the periods of peace alternating with war which man has survived for generations, and will continue to do so. It is not the Revolution which counts; it is not even the violence of fraternal combat which will be omnipotent: it is the works which survive man, and in so doing, grant him eternal existence. Manuel learns well the lesson which the author himself begins to appreciate at this moment.

Attignies is a sympathetic German Communist, for whom commitment is particularly difficult since his father is a Fascist leader. He flies in combat together with the International Brigade "dans une étrange fraternité." (E: 34) The members of the International Brigade - composed of Polish, German, Flemish, French, and Bulgarian Resistance fighters - round out the fraternal sym-

phony of participation of people who share the desire to rid Spain of Fascist rule. Malraux's own squadron in the Spanish Civil War was not unlike the International Brigade he describes in L'Espoir. However, as much as Malraux glorified the violent action and the virile fraternity of his men, he witnessed the deaths of many of them, causing him to recognize that violence and virile fraternity do not really eliminate their enemy, death. This novel does not merely symbolize a movement towards national fraternity, but a movement which envisions the brotherhood of all men, in a majestic collective action against destiny. As Malraux's argument in favor of Revolution weakened, as more and more men succumbed to destiny in the form of violent death, as Malraux understood that Revolution could never totally give way to peace - somewhere in the world, people would always be fighting to obtain their "rights of man" - Malraux looked towards a larger collectivity, a more vast fraternity to secure the values essential to man's free and dignified existence. (He knew already, however, that the Revolution could only bring men together; that it was up to the initiative of each man to use fraternal combat not as an end, but as a means to achieve immortality for himself and his race by the constructive, lasting and creative acts he completes, inspired by his participation in Revolutionary activity for the betterment of mankind.)

Magnin is the character who most resembles the author. He is the head of aviation, and is characterized as a Viking. He is a socialist, in combat because he wants all men to have the possibility of possessing a meaningful existence free from degra-

dation. Magnin is a revolutionary who does not concur with the philosophy of the Communist Party which places itself above the Revolution. Since he is a leader, he suffers as do Ximénès and Manuel, "la maladie des chefs." Magnin's team of men includes Sembrano and Polsky - two very brave pilots. Sembrano is an interesting character because of his history of pacifism: he deliberately takes risks and flies extra missions to resolve the conflict between his bombing raids and his dislike of violence. He is finally wounded, along with Polsky, during a mission over Teruel: "Sembrano reçut un furieux coup de trique sur le bras droit[.]" (E: 424) The plane goes down with its engines afire, into the water:

Plusieurs d'entre eux ne savaient pas nager - et on ne nage pas avec une balle explosive dans le pied, le bras ou le ventre[.] Sembrano[.] cherchait son bras dans l'eau comme un chien court après sa queue; la blessure faisait des taches rouges dans l'eau déjà rose de la carlingue, mais le bras était à sa place[.] Le sang à la place du bras, de la tête, de la jambe. (E: 425,-6, 433)

Magnin has the opportunity of flying a peasant over Teruel for the purpose of identifying a clandestine Fascist air strip. After much delay, when the field is identified, Magnin and his men blow it up. They are caught in a counter-attack which again costs many lives. One plane crashes into the mountains of Teruel: "Un mort, deux blessés graves[.] Gardet, salement: on a peur pour les yeux. Taillefer, la jambe gauche cassée en trois endroits. Mireaux, quatre balles dans le bras. Scali, une balle explosive dans le pied." (E: 459, 461) At Linares, a human chain of men and stretchers is formed to transport the wounded down from the moun-

tain. All the peasants unite in a glorious, fraternal action, a far more boundless symbol of human fraternity than the chain formed by Tchen and his men in La Condition Humaine. The chain becomes an enduring symbol of man's union against the absurd, just as the descent of the broken men symbolizes destiny's continual efforts to humble man:

Tous les autres blessés voyaient; et quand ils avaient vu la foule, ils s'étaient efforcés de sourire, même le bombardier. Gardet ne regardait pas. Il était vivant; des remparts, la foule distinguait, derrière lui, le cercueil épais. Recouvert jusqu'au menton par la couverture, et, sous le serre-tête en casque, ce pansement si plat qu'il ne pouvait y avoir de nez dessous, ce blessé-là était l'image même que, depuis des siècles, les paysans se faisaient de la guerre. (E: 474)

Magnin's efforts end on a note of hope, as is implied by the title of the novel: he visualizes the birth of an army, and the battle taking a turn for the better: "En bas, les tanks républicains, avec un ordre d'exercice sur la Place Rouge, attaquaient, revenaient, attaquaient de nouveau." (E: 483) It is, however, hope void of glory and pomp; it is a hope founded totally on realistic, human endeavor. In retrospect, we know that the endeavors of the Revolutionaries were to no avail, and Magnin's "espoir" soured into "désespoir." Witnessing all those lives lost in vain, and in just a short while, all of Europe caught up in a second world war, forced Malraux to reconsider his views on violence. It is with horror, not respect, that violence is regarded, in the last novel.

Finally, the ordinary people of Spain, play active roles as combatants in their Revolution. It is their very real, pained faces that we see in Malraux's description; it is their hate which

wells up inside them as they watch their homes burn, their children blown apart. It is their violent reaction that we understand, and with which we identify. The Revolutionaries open the pawn shops, and the people storm them to regain their possessions. After the capture of three Fascists by the Communists, "les trois hommes avaient été fusillés dans une rue voisine; les corps étaient tombés sur le ventre, têtes au soleil, pieds à l'ombre." (E: 87) A young boy passes by the corpses, dips his finger in their blood and writes "death to Fascism" on a nearby wall. The dead and wounded lie everywhere, and, in the daylight, they are no longer eerie symbols of the forces of Evil and Destiny, they are genuine reminders of Death, and man's incapacity to erase its presence. The stench of death and flames pervade the air: "[. ]Une odeur humide et lourde dans laquelle se fondait celle des cadavres." (E: 235)

"Pour la première fois, il (Manuel) était en face d'une fraternité qui prenait la forme de l'action." (E: 270) The people do what they can in any capacity to fight the Fascists. The mingling of their spilled blood with the blood of the foreigners who have come to the assistance of the people of Spain, makes the bond of virile fraternity stronger, even though it is powerless to obliterate death. All the people join in one violent endeavor to take back all that is theirs:

Entre les maisons, les Espagnols, qui le matin ont arrêté trois attaques, viennent de recevoir l'ordre d'attaquer à leur tour: les maisons prises par les Maures sont reprises à la grenade, les tanks sont arrêtés à la dynamite, et les Maures repoussés par les baïonnettes des Internationaux, trouvent [. ] les anarchistes qui poussent en première ligne les canons républicains.  
(E: 331)

The scenes of all-embracing violence are larger in scope than ever before in the Malraux novels. No one escapes the blood and flames, not women nor children nor clergy nor foreigners. The horror, not the glory, of the charring fires abounds: "Piquets de miliciens, gardes d'assaut, services de secours regardaient, fascinés par la trouble exaltation des flammes, la vie inépuisable du feu. Assis, un chat gris levait la tête." (E: 338) The fire which caused the Fireman of Massacre to flee, is back. This time, it is very real, and the odor of blood and flesh is in the wind. Although the flames cannot destroy the Revolution, it is true that they can kill the people who participate in it.

Malraux's preoccupation with scenes of violence reached its climax with this novel, because, for the first time, it was not his imagination describing the acts of violence, it was his day to day observation of sights most men hope never to see. The frustrations which must have outweighed the successes of his Squadron (as evidenced by his need to come to America to appeal for more money; as known by his lack of aircraft and good men - most of his planes, and many of his men, were shot down and destroyed), only increased the knowledge that what he was doing was so very little in view of the overwhelming powers of the Fascists - agents of Evil and Destiny. For the first time, he must have seen the outpouring of blood to such a degree that it did not fascinate him: it appalled him. Man has no answer for the child's loss of a lower jaw, or for a woman whose baby has been blown up. Acts of violence cannot bring back life or limb to the dead or mutilated. Again, the only saving quality of the Revolution is that it

brings men together, and enables each of them to go in conquest of values which are essential to making their lives significant while they exist. It cannot eradicate death; perhaps, it can alleviate some of the conditions of the absurd to which men are forced to submit when they are oppressed. Malraux's fascination turned to repugnance at this stage, although he would not completely renounce violent action as a prime factor in combatting the absurd and death until after the war, when his own personal tragedies started to occur.

A côté de Ramos, un milicien paysan dont le pansement s'était défait, regardait son sang descendre tout le long de son bras nu et tomber goutte à goutte sur l'asphalte: dans cette sombre lumière, la peau était rouge, l'asphalte noir était rouge, et le sang, brun clair comme du madère, devenait en tombant d'un jaune lumineux. (E: 339)

The "bleeding hearts" of Lunes have long ceased to exist. They have been replaced by too much real blood for the fantasy to have any meaning any longer. Shade, an American newspaper reporter, voices what Malraux will conclude somewhat later: "J'ai horreur de la guerre. Que de sang allait laver la pluie!" (E: 345, 347) Madrid is burning, and the people are dying by the hundreds. However, they still have hope, as manifested in song. There is a Nietzschean flavor in the following citation: "J'ai un copain qui appelle ça le moment où les morts se mettent à chanter. Il y a une fraternité qui ne se trouve que de l'autre côté de la mort." (E: 363) Once again, music is a combatant of death and the absurd, recalling to man the songs of the generations which lived before him, triumphing over death and the absurd because music renders man immortal.

The Spanish Civil War summarizes itself in blood and flames:

Cet après-midi, je (Shade) suis arrivé, quelques minutes après une explosion, devant une boucherie: là où les femmes avaient fait queue étaient des taches; le sang du boucher tué coulait de l'étal, entre les boeufs ouverts et les moutons pendus aux crochets de fer. Un crépuscule sinistre se levait sur l'Age du Feu. Les trois plus grands hôpitaux brûlaient. L'hôtel Savoy brûlait. Des églises brûlaient, des musées brûlaient, la Bibliothèque Nationale brûlait, le Ministère de l'Intérieur brûlait, une halle brûlait, les petits marchés de planches flambaient, les maisons s'écroulaient dans des envolées d'étincelles. (E: 377, 379)

And yet, there is hope born from the fire and the destruction, as evidenced by the people of Linares, coming to the aid of the Resistance fighters: "Sur tout le front, les mains des infirmiers étaient devenues rouges." (E: 480) And yet, does it compensate? The blood shed by the peasants, the socialists, the anarchists, the Communists, the Republicans, and the foreigners cannot be replaced. The dead cannot be revitalized. As this is the case, violence is no longer glamorous or desirable; it is vile, for it not only does not prevent death, it often delivers man to death. Although the value of virile fraternity is not questioned, and the importance of united combat against all which humiliates and oppresses man still holds sway, the violence necessary to overthrow tyranny is no longer advocated. Violence and Revolution are doomed; they do not conquer death - they do not eliminate the absurd. They do, however, give men like Manuel, Magnin, Polsky, Sembrano, Garcia, Scali, Captain House, and more, the opportunity to confront

the foe in a united effort. Perhaps, the fraternity born of Revolution and violence is enough to redeem their exercise. As Malraux leaves the kingdom of night behind him, as he faces the horrors of war in the reality of daylight, and not just in the nightmares of his imagination, he recognizes that they cannot be impeded by simple solutions; man will have to labor in other directions than violence to blot out the conditions of the absurd. After an overdose of blood and fire, Malraux is about ready to renege his former stand on the desirability of violence and Revolution. He gives us one more occasion to corroborate his disillusionment in his last novel, Les Noyers de l'Altenburg.

## II

Les Noyers de l'Altenburg is the sixth and last novel by the author, announcing the end of the works involving action, and the beginning of those to deal with esthetics. Malraux's participation in World War II freed him from the obsession with violence by exposing him to the world's most disastrous holocaust of all times. Malraux could sustain the thought of man's violence towards man if it involved his attempt at self-liberation from an oppressor. What had been joined to this concept was a deliberate, calculated endeavor to suppress men through violent means, for no reason whatsoever, or for a perverted, inhuman one. The senseless deaths of Josette Clotis and Malraux's two half-brothers only increased his aversion towards violence, obliging him to seek another response to the conquest of the absurd. In this triptych of scenes,

Malraux mingles autobiography and fiction, culminating in his most horrific representation of violence, and yet, indicating wherein lies mankind's hope for the future. The two outside panels describe war and prison camps; the central panel records a few days in the lives of the Alsatian family Berger, and the discussions in Dietrich Berger's house on the eve of World War I.

The novel opens in a prison camp near Chartres. A French prisoner of the Nazis, young Berger (Malraux chose this name for himself when he became actively involved in the combat; in addition, the prison camp from which he escaped was not itself far from Chartres), paints an image of a world in war: "Depuis ma blessure jusqu'aux hanches, mes jambes devenues une gaine voluptueuse et paralysée se dissolvent comme dans le champ de trèfle, lorsque nous attendions les blindés ennemis." (NA: 14) Images of German tanks, wounded prisoners, blood-caked tins of food, flames in the distance, men smeared with their own blood as they grope for bread crumbs thrown to them through the barbed wire, reveal a time when despair was prevalent, a time when those "days of wrath" predicted by the author really did come to pass. Young Berger reflects on the similar pattern of events which caught his father in war, some twenty-five years earlier. We can only concur with the implication that the prior violence did not in any way instruct mankind, that it had no beneficial or lasting effect on humanity; instead, in just one generation, man was again killing man, serving the absurd with a tool which Malraux had always conceived as a combatant of the absurd. The world had learned nothing;

as this was the case, Malraux rejected his choice of Revolution and violence as an "anti-destin," since both had accomplished nought in the eradication of the absurd.

In returning to the life of Vincent Berger, the father of young Berger, we discover that the character has much in common with the author: he has much the same desire for "engagement;" he suffers many of the same deceptions. Shortly after Vincent's return from Constantinople, he learns of his father's suicide. (Dietrich had prepared strychnine and a revolver.) The scene recalls the suicide of Claude's (La Voie Royale) grandfather, and is later retold in the Antimémoires: "« . . . Devant un homme qui s'est tué fermement, je n'ai jamais vu un autre sentiment que le respect, » (NA: 36) is the opinion of Vincent. Vincent's uncle Walter organizes colloquia with several eminent colleagues. These conferences in the vicinity of Altenburg take on particular importance, for it is through these sessions that the new form of "anti-destin" will materialize. Vincent himself has the degree in Oriental languages which the author never obtained. He engages himself in the young Turkish movement for Pan-Islamism, as young André devotes himself to the cause of the Annamites. Vincent is a cross between André and T. E. Lawrence, joining with Enver Pacha in action and adventure across Turkey, and the North African desert, hoping to stir in the nomadic tribes a desire for national union, and establishing his own myth, with "le désir fanatique de laisser sur la terre une cicatrice." (NA: 64) This parallels the wishes of the author in the first stage of his revolutionary development. Vincent's interests lie in the union of all the Turkish people; it

is his call to destiny (history is the twentieth century form of destiny),<sup>(6)</sup> demanding his absence from the West. He enjoys the camaraderie of combat, and the sense of the successful conquest of the absurd. In the desert, however, Vincent is no longer acting; he is preaching. He finds illiterate peoples whose primitive ways are not ready for the Touranism he is forcing upon them. He suffers from dysentery, à la Garine (Les Conquéranrs), is beaten physically by a fanatic, and also takes a moral beating. The latter is symbolic of his break with Communism. Suddenly, Vincent (André) comprehends that there is no Pan-Islamism (comprehensive Communism); there is only a Turkish (Stalinistic) state. Vincent (André) separates himself from the ideology which is false to the original action in which he has engaged himself. Vincent is a shaman, a lover of myths and action, trying to impose his dream upon a world which rejects his sorcery. His conquest of himself and the world, his power as a shaman to reveal the mysteries of the universe, foreshadow the birth of the artist, the creative genius who will inherit the ability to conquer the absurd.

Greatly deceived, as was André by his early experiences, Vincent comes back to the West where he rediscovers life, and the anguish which is an integral part of it; however, he does understand that man can combat the absurd in the West without fleeing towards the Orient. He is given the opportunity to do so in World War I, where he acquaints himself with genuine fraternity, not the idol worship of a Hero-myth; but, sadly, he also witnesses many of the negative aspects of mankind as well.

As his deception with action grew stronger, Malraux turned towards discussions. This last novel is not entirely a novel; it is composed of a central essay in which the theme of fundamental man is put forward. If action cannot compensate man and his absurd condition, then something else must. This can only be an act of creativity which symbolizes the will and tenacity of man to exist through the generations, with transformations which render each era unique, and serve to instruct each generation as to what preceded it. One example of man's control over the absurd is related in an anecdote by Walter, involving Nietzsche. (Walter knew him personally.) Nietzsche's bursting out in coherent, sublime song during a train ride in the darkness of a tunnel, (after he had gone mad), is proof that man can draw from himself his own answer to the abyss, his own way to become immortal, his own contention against the absurd:

Dans la prison dont parle Pascal, les hommes sont parvenus à tirer d'eux-mêmes une réponse qui envahit, si j'ose dire, d'immortalité, ceux qui en sont dignes. Et dans ce wagon - et quelquefois ensuite - ...les millénaires du ciel étoilé m'ont semblé aussi effacés par l'homme, que nos pauvres destins sont effacés par le ciel étoilé. Le plus grand mystère c'est que, dans cette prison, nous tirions de nous-mêmes des images assez puissantes pour nier notre néant. (NA: 97, 98-9)

The evolution is clear, and the role of the colloquia significant. Man will find his possible solution to the absurd only through his individual efforts; the collective endeavor to ameliorate the human condition will not succeed.

As Revolution does not cause man to be eternal, and man desires immortality, his answer to this problem must be resolved

in another way. The possibility of culture as a propagator of everlasting life arises, if we consider that the artifacts which have survived war, pestilence, etc., through the ages, are products of men who wished to resist death by the creation of works of permanence. (Malraux was completing his own cycle of ideas in revisiting his first love: art.) Möllberg is Frobenius, an archeologist, ethnologist, and explorer; a specialist of African civilizations, an anti-Spenglerian. He views destiny as the dissolution of man across history, man's only permanence being his nothingness. Möllberg questions the entire notion of man, referring to his studies on African civilizations which were so fatalistic in nature that "les enfants nés pendant les jours sans lune étaient tués à leur naissance." (NA: 131) This continued for centuries, each generation learning nothing from the one which preceded it, because "l'homme est un hasard, et pour l'essentiel, le monde est fait d'oubli." (NA: 142) Möllberg believes there is no association between eras and peoples; fundamental man is a myth, and our civilization does not carry in it the human past.

Malraux rejoices in the defense of the Spenglerian view that history is not linear; it is a series of endless transformations. As jubilantly as he ran to the defense of the Revolution, he now comes to the defense of fundamental man, hoping to prove that man can attain immortality and conquer the absurd through art and music. (He does stay faithful to this final metamorphosis of thought as evidenced by his role in the Gaullist movement, and by his establishing the "Maisons de Culture.") "Quelque chose

d'éternel demeure en l'homme, - en l'homme qui pense...quelque chose que j'appellerai sa part divine: c'est son aptitude à mettre le monde en question..." (NA: 147)

Finally, the walnut trees dramatically and majestically prove man's permanence and continuity on the earth. The fact that they exist, that the earth exists is a proclamation that man too exists. The trees symbolize man; they are images of strength and beauty, and are witness to man's stay on earth. Theirs is the incarnation of the will to live. Their enormous trunks with twisted branches, old and heavy, rooted deeply to the land "imposaient à la fois l'idée d'une volonté et d'une métamorphose sans fin." (NA: 151) They attest to the existence of a fundamental man. Theirs is also the proof that something more powerful than death itself prevails - the continuity of life.

"Malraux is ready to name the ultimate Hero among men and the supreme defiance of destiny: the Artist and his Art."<sup>(7)</sup> The artist can create an object of enduring value, like the very presence of the walnut trees which subsist for ages, creating as well, his own immortality, providing him with the chance not only to conquer the absurd, but to vanquish death. "Notre art me paraît une rectification du monde, un moyen d'échapper à la condition d'homme. Dans ce qu'il a d'essentiel, notre art est une humanisation du monde." (NA: 128) This is somewhat of an about-face from Scali's (L'Espoir) negation of the power of art in relation to the power of blood. However, what is first proclaimed as escape from man's fate will evolve into the only logical adversary for man's fate. Man will defy the absurd, escape his servitude,

rid himself of all humbling forces, and transcend his destiny. Culture will return meaning to his life, and will furnish him the mode of evading the abyss.

From the height of this discovery, Malraux descends into the worst scene of despair and destruction he has depicted yet. Vincent is on the Vistula Front, fighting for Germany against Russia. A year has passed since the colloquia, and Vincent is as comfortable in his virile fraternity as he had been in the reunions at Altenburg. His first deception occurs when he is obliged to take notes on the interrogation of a Russian female spy, la Rosnowa; Vincent objects to the means of the inquisitor, using a child to break the woman. This first chicanery, however, is but the beginning of the distasteful experiences to follow; before long, Vincent will live the horrors that only man can cause his fellow men.

It is no longer a question of the chance violence on the part of individuals who wish only to improve their lot by throwing off their tyrant. It is not even the Revolution of whole classes of underprivileged peoples trying to equalize their fate with that of their subjugators. It is a senseless, offensive action of conquest, of one human element by another; and man, in his ingenuity, has invented a more powerful way to dispose of his fellow man than ever before. Prof. Hoffmann, responsible for discovering a gas that can destroy man slowly but surely, is a product of a world that knows no sanity. (The Prof. Hoffmanns' of the world have since given us the atomic bomb, the hydrogen bomb, overkill, napalm, germ warfare, etc.) It is this final straw that compels Malraux to break with violence - there is no way that violence can

compensate for the agonizing pain and eventual death suffered by men exposed to chemical warfare. (Although he did not view the attack on the Vistula Front, Malraux saw and heard enough of the horrendous medical experiments of the Nazis, and their use of gas to destroy lives, to convince him that violence in the hands of men could only spell out death and destruction, instead of conquering life's adversaries.)

The Germans are in Austrian Poland planning their attack against Russia. "L'acide cyanhydrique demande un demi-gramme au mètre cube d'air: le sujet entre en convulsions et tombe mort dans une rigidité tétanique. C'est parfait." (NA: 173) The satanic element in man is highly sophisticated now, perfected to the extent that when man talks of killing his fellow man, he wants it accomplished with a high degree of efficiency. He disavows the use of certain toxicants for they tend to be less expedient in the massacre than others:

Le sulfate d'ethyle bichloré, c'est peut-être le gaz de combat par excellence. Un produit caustique, vésicant et toxique à la fois! Tout particulièrement dangereux, notez! car le sujet ne souffre pas au moment même de l'intoxication: l'action commence plusieurs heures après... (NA: 176)

The Professor even attempts to justify the use of chemical warfare as the most humane means of combat:

Si vous vous placez d'un point de vue supérieur les gaz constituent le moyen de combat le plus humain. Car le gaz s'annonce, notez! la cornée opaque devient d'abord bleue, la respiration commence à siffler, l'iris - c'est même très curieux! - passe presque au noir. En somme, l'ennemi est prévenu. (NA: 179)

However, all does not run as smoothly in the gas attack as the Professor would have liked. Most of the soldiers fighting

in the war are just ordinary men who are not able to cope with the mass obliteration of other men. The truth that they know and understand prevents them from hating their opponents whom they know to be ordinary men as well: "Pauv' malheureux! C'est pas le Russe ou le Français ou l'Allemand qu'est mauvais...C'est l'homme en général!" (NA: 191) They do not comprehend the violence which is about to strike their enemies, in the form of a yellow fog, penetrating, invading every living form, in a cataclysmic rage:

Tout à coup, quelque chose fonça des lignes russes vers les gaz, un cheval. Le cheval les chargeait, sans cavalier. Il s'arrêta encore. Un hennissement traversa la vallée. Il reprit son galop, fonça droit vers les gaz. Il disparut dans le grand silence. (NA: 204-5)

Man has lost control of the violence of which he is author. It spreads, like an eerie, unknown power, over the fields, through the trees, blackening and killing everything and being it encounters, replacing life with an abnormal silence, and the colors of death. As death's agent, the gas knows no side, disposing of both Germans and Russians, young and old, bad and good, in a scene of total physical and moral devastation:

Mineur pour qui la lampe était le Bon Dieu, sous-officier qui allait au temple pour se souvenir, fossoyeur dont l'enfant n'avait appris le prénom qu'à cause de chien, ajusteur, comptable, coiffeur, tueurs de cochons, cantonnier, lecteur de Trois Boy-Scouts, et celui qui n'avait pas épousé sa femme pour sa beauté et celui dont la femme n'était pas bien jolie non plus, hommes semblables à tant d'autres, entre tous les hommes morts et tous les hommes tués! (NA: 210)

This was more than anyone had bargained for. The blackened grass, the decomposing trees, the slime, the dung-colored leaves, the convulsed expressions, the rotting skins of the animals, re-

volt the men to such a point that they completely forget that the Russians are their enemies, and they rush to save them. Frightened by the horror which does not even leave a "centimeter of life," understanding that they are responsible for this valley of the dead, they carry out the contorted Russians on their backs, endeavoring to stop the terror which they launched. The screams of utter agony are intolerable, and Vincent himself, although wounded in the knee, plunges through the deadened valley, searching for his Russian. (This is not Perken seeking to prove himself a man by saving Grabot; this is Vincent, mortified by man's deadly capacity to torture and kill his fellow men, who heads into the woods, not in a test of strength, but to save a human life he has almost been responsible for taking.) As he passes the returning Germans, remorse is written on their faces as they carry back Russians with "la face gazée - atroce. Les lèvres et les yeux du Russe étaient violets dans sa peau grise." (NA: 224) The men cease listening to orders, endangering their own lives now, to stop as quickly as possible " le hurlement de l'extrême souffrance." (NA: 232) One Russian, naked, his mouth twisted in an epileptic fit, jumps on all fours, in an illustration of the force man possesses to destroy other men. "L'Esprit du Mal ici était plus fort encore que la mort..." (NA: 233) This time, there are no wounds, no blood; still, the horror has reached its ultimate level for Malraux.

Vincent runs madly across the forest, undergoing the effects of the gas himself. He has discovered the ultimate deception; man is now capable of limitless violence to himself, to the land, to his friends, and enemies alike. He is losing his conscience,

and no longer can define good and evil. He is unable to use violence as a weapon against the absurd, for violence now serves the absurd in humbling man to the stage where he does not remain human at all. It is only this first time in the use of gas that the enemy ceases to be an enemy; after, man hardens, and accepts what he is capable of doing to men, women, and children. It is for these reasons that Malraux has an abrupt and total break with his prior thoughts on violence. He turns in the absolute, opposite direction when he chooses art, a most peaceful form of "anti-destin." He justifies the turn by soon proclaiming Gaullism his new "school of energy," and using art as his new outlet for non-violent but intense activity.

Erich Maria Remarque, in his classic All Quiet on the Western Front, reinforces the hideousness of the gas attack: "I remember the awful sights in the hospital: the gas patients who in day-long suffocation cough their burnt lungs up in clots. The gas still creeps over the ground and sinks into all hollows. Like a big, soft jelly-fish it floats into our shell-hole and lolls there obscenely."<sup>(8)</sup> The black lips, scorched lungs, blue faces, hemorrhages, suffocation, etc. abound in Remarque's novel which does not limit itself to the horror of the gas attack. Remarque's images of the First World War are basically the same as those observed by Malraux during his participation in the Second: shells, tanks, starvation, death, dysentery, murder, burning, trenches, hospitals, common graves, prisons, beatings, etc. Nothing had changed. There was no point to the combat, nor had there ever been any.

The final scene takes place just prior to young Berger's capture and placement in the Chartres prison camp. It is Malraux's good-bye to war, and to its scenes of virile fraternity. It also depicts the second return from the grave, the second rebirth of a Malraucian hero. Young Berger is fighting for France against Germany. He shares a tank with three men, and as they approach the enemy, he experiences the same excitement characterized by sexual intensity, that many of the earlier characters enjoy: "Aucun nom ne désigne le sentiment de marcher à l'ennemi, et pourtant il est aussi spécifique, aussi fort que le désir sexuel ou l'angoisse." (NA: 267) After the tank gets stuck in a ditch, the men await death which already seems to live with them in the tank. However, they are reawakened to life when they successfully move the tank over the trench, and out of the way of immediate danger and certain death. This rebirth to life purifies the last of the Malraucian heroes, enabling Malraux to continue in his vein of esthetic works. His final hero awakens to the hope which is born with daylight, and Malraux permanently leaves his world of nightmares, obscurity, and despair. His new faith is born with fundamental man - man who will exist like the walnut trees, forever, despite the violence of the world, because he has founded his permanency on the works of art he creates as a legacy for the future of men to follow.

\* \* \* \* \*

The final two works of fiction point in a definite direction. Young, enthusiastic Malraux had been replaced by an older

Malraux who had seen action. Young Malraux had dreamed scenes of combat where the classic Hero "did in" his opponent, Destiny, or if he succumbed to his fate, he did so with a tragic grace, and retained his classic proportions. What Malraux observed in the Spanish Civil War and in World War II caused him a rude awakening to a world which did not abound in classical heroes, but in ordinary men often facing sordid opposition in a struggle for their basic rights as men. Violence and Revolution could no longer be lauded as the final say in man's defense against death and the absurd, for, more often than not, the damage caused by them was too great a price to pay. Malraux saw men, not fictional heroes, contend with death and the absurd in the Spanish Civil War and in World War II; when these men died, it was as if no trace of them ever existed. As this was the case, Malraux could no longer justify violence, for it simply brought with it more violence; man learned no lesson whatsoever from his past wars, and with each war, he erased the sacrifices made by the men of the previous struggles, who died attempting to defy the absurd, and joining to their meager existence, some semblance of liberty and dignity.

Malraux's new approach to the successful defiance of the absurd is the one to which he has remained faithful some thirty years. Disillusioned by the violence of war, and disturbed by the many personal tragedies which plagued him, Malraux discovered a way to overcome death itself: by perpetuating man via creative works of art. He replaced political action by cultural action, and never betrayed his goals of liberty and fraternity. Fundamental man has

existed and will exist for eons because he has the ability to leave vestiges of himself and his customs, for the people of the future to study. Hence, man can conquer mortality, obtaining for himself the eternal life he wishes. In this way, he can assure himself of "laisser sur la carte une cicatrice," as does the author, through his novels, essays, sketches, esthetic works, etc.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Avriel Goldberger, Visions of a New Hero: the heroic life according to André Malraux, p.183.
- <sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.
- <sup>3</sup>Robert Payne, A Portrait of André Malraux, p.314-5.
- <sup>4</sup>Jacques Zéphir, p.4 outline, notes L'Espoir, 3/1/'73.
- <sup>5</sup>Cecil Jenkins, André Malraux, p.92.
- <sup>6</sup>Edward Gannon, S. J., The Honor of Being a Man: The World of André Malraux, p.123.
- <sup>7</sup>Goldberger, op. cit., p.233.
- <sup>8</sup>Erich Maria Remarque, All Quiet on the Western Front, pp. 68-9.

## **CONCLUSION**

"His tragic hero is a type of Faust who incites the spirit of Revolution, and finds that this demon, like all of his kind, serves Man only at a price - the death of the humanistic ideal, of the respect for and reliance on individual lives."

(Geoffrey H. Hartmann, André Malraux: The Return from Hell)

"The heroism of man, as it was for Nietzsche, is the fulfillment of a will. In Malraux's career, the will has taken two forms: the political will, whose essential features are commitment and action, and the rhetorical will devoted to an indirect creation through the powers of human expressions. The proper successor of gods and heroes is the artist."

(William Righter, The Rhetorical Hero: An Essay on the Aesthetics of André Malraux)

"Au-delà de l'action, il y a cette autre aventure: l'esprit prenant la forme de la pierre, d'un livre, ou d'une toile, l'éternité enclose dans le secret d'une oeuvre d'art. Il ne peut rien contre la mort ni contre les fatalités naturelles - à l'exception des formes recréées qui seules demeurent lorsque le vent de l'histoire a déraciné les civilisations."

(Pierre de Boisdeffre, Malraux)

Malraux was involved with violence and the concept of intense activity for a quarter of a century. His passionate fervor was born with a life which knew no quietude. The Viking traditions of his ancestors marked Malraux's youth which was characterized with bizarre adventure and the flavor of kermis. He did not mature in a normal setting or even in a stable world; his generation groped for inner peace to mollify the metaphysical turmoil which tormented it. Belonging to a "godless" generation created anguish for a youth who was nurtured in a depressing "ambiance," highlighted by suicide, fields of war, and the monochromatic grey of Bondy. It was no wonder that young André turned towards his imagination to open the kaleidoscope of adventure and experience which a boy of his colorful background would inherently seek. As a sensitive youth, André permitted all of his encounters to impress him strongly: some experiences were favorable, while others were not. His independent spirit already prepared him for a life free from conventional acts. As a young man, he flirted danger, and chose endeavors involving risk for he could not bear the boredom of the day-to-day pace of living, which was void of all meaning. Malraux hungered for the flair and bravado which was lacking in his existence.

He began, as a young man, as an egotistical adventurer, and ended his romance with violence as a sorely disenchanted, mature adult, some twenty-five years later, after much soul-searching and examination of the role of intense activity in his own life. His rejection of his early theories on the importance of violent deeds as a defiance of destiny's powers to thwart man, came only

after much deliberation and modification of his definition of violence, which metamorphosed from individual acts or challenges against the absurd to fraternal commitment to do united battle with destiny. Malraux's first defiance of fate was purely selfish in motive: his gambling, his life as a dandy, his keeping company with criminals, etc., is similar to the revolt of any youth, hoping to shock the world into recognizing the independent existence of a non-conformist. Every generation suffers the anguish of discovering that life ends in death; because we are "homo sapiens" we shall suffer this consequence of thought "ad infinitum." This crisis which adolescence uncovers, was perhaps felt more severely by Malraux because of his sensitivity and his background. Therefore, his reaction to fate is a more intense one. He is not satisfied with daring destiny on his own soil; he must venture into unknown regions where his action is more provoking, and therefore, more significant. Malraux selects Cambodia and the Orient for its possibility of the unknown, allowing him a greater opportunity to test the powers of his opponent.

His conquest does not go as he wishes it to, and the long series of deceptions begins. Malraux's concept of the serene East is a falsehood; the hotbed of corruption and intrigue, however, does permit him further acts of defiance and anti-traditional modes of behavior. His short-lived career as a newspaperman, and his involvement in the Young Annam movement, is no long-range commitment to the betterment of mankind; his outspoken violent attacks on Cognacq are no more than verbal outpourings, and he returns to France without truly accomplishing anything other than

the realization that the conquest of destiny must occur through more than just self-possession.

The young man was developing into a full-grown adult, and his ideas were undergoing transformation in a corresponding fashion. Malraux was still violently opposed to the absurd condition of man in the face of death; however, now he attempted to change those conditions so that life would be somewhat less absurd for all men. He chose the defense of certain invaluable principles such as liberty, fraternity, and dignity, and he also chose to persecute their antithesis - humiliation, solitude, and imprisonment - confident that one such contention would eliminate the threat of the absurd, and also forestall death. Fraternal Revolution became the means of such a defense. Malraux became a servant of the Revolution in both body and spirit. However, when Revolution on foreign soil was replaced by war at home, when the potential of men to violate the rights of other men increased (instead of their desire to see all men coexisting harmoniously), when out of the violence of hope was born the violence of despair and the threat of more violence, more inhuman cruelty, Malraux was obliged to renounce violence altogether, and find another hope capable of challenging fate.

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Each stage of Malraux's thoughts on violence is reflected in his writings. His early writings pose the problem of metaphysical anguish which menaces the young intellectual who does not

believe in God, thereby inheriting the responsibility of a world at odds with an indifferent cosmos. These writings compel the author to question himself, and to respond to his interrogations, no matter how painful these would be. Malraux, at this time, looked towards the Orient with mixed emotions, knowing that the East meant calm tranquility, but also aware that Western man needed the tension-provoking conflict which drew him into constant violent contact with the absurd. Western man was ready to confront the absurd only after he conquered himself, and allayed the fears he had of the unknown. Although he yearned for inner peace, the only way he could triumph over destiny was to maintain an awareness of his condition, try to ameliorate it, but never escape changing it.

Malraux's prose-fantasies illustrate the nightmares of an anxiety-prone young mind, and like Goya's "Désastres," Malraux's "farfelu" writings express the same dismay at a chaotic and cruel world which exacts death from all, and remains indifferent to metaphysical anguish, physical pain and suffering, torture, humiliation and subjugation. Through these "farfelu" works, Malraux paints the blood of violence in all its shades of red, brown, and burgundy. This verbal catharsis is necessary, and the burlesque characters merely serve as representatives of the surrealistic and haunting scenes of violent activity which drifted into the young author's mind from the history of the era, and registered as reflections of Destiny's omnipotence.

In the first two novels, Malraux's heroes - Garine and Perken - are individuals, no longer mythological creatures, living

intensely so as to combat their common ever-present enemy, death. They completely engage themselves in acts of violence which will oblige life to be more meaningful and fruitful to them. They do not yet know what it is to confront the absurd in a united way; they are one step from Malraux's "fraternité virile," which develops when men enter into a pact of communal, revolutionary aims for political, social, and economic amelioration of their lot. They do, however, know the necessity of striking at the absurd, and testing their "volonté de puissance." The manner which they select is intense activity, be it adventure or eroticism, to do as much damage as possible to shake loose the hold which fate / death has on man.

Malraux's second classification of hero - Kyo, Katow, and Kassner - is a Revolutionary who has chosen violence in a social and political setting, aspiring to serve humanity by ridding it of misery and oppression. He is not searching for a justification of his own existence; he has found it in the marriage to the collective. His violence serves the rectification of the human condition, and even though he may die, he does reduce the effect of destiny by not facing his death alone. Anguish causes much less grief to this hero; he is not an individual confronting death: he is all men joined in virile combat against poverty, oppression, disease, inequality, and other tangible horrors which plague and persecute man. Death as an abstract concept does not have the same significance to this hero as it had for the earlier ones. Kyo, Katow, and Kassner have no apprehension of the unknown terror of death, for they are much too pre-

occupied with safeguarding the values of life, such as liberty, dignity, and fraternity. As they combat together, in the cooperative, revolutionary effort, they have no time for morbid thoughts of personal anguish in the face of the absurd, or of inadequacies or flaws in their character which will hinder them from exercising their power to conquer their enemies.

The weak and selfish characters of the early novels are still present to an extent, but they serve as contrast to the efficient, committed heroes. Malraux describes the nonsuccess of those characters who try to escape a life of intensity. These latter are alone and defeated in life, and are scorned by Malraux. Their refusal to engage in action isolates them. Their blood does not flow with that of the Revolutionaries, and they are incapable of virile fraternity, one possible means of challenging the absurd.

The Revolutionary heroes attain the highest levels of dignity and self-esteem through their communion and sacrifice. They are subservient to the Revolution, and use violence not as a source of constant, personal tension, but as an effective mode of combat in the struggle against the oppressors, who are now to be found in any sphere of the globe.<sup>(1)</sup> The heroes do not dread death if they have created a lasting bond with other men in life, if they have fought together to overthrow humiliation, and return man to a state of dignity.<sup>(2)</sup>

The violence of battle, the blood, flesh and flames are all important to the initiation into virile combat. The spilled blood cleanses and purifies a stained and tainted world. The flames eradicate all erroneous notions and ideologies, letting

the world start afresh. Even a flirtation with death can bring about a renaissance. With the Revolutionary heroes, is born a new hope: the hope that once tyranny and oppression are obliterated, man will survive, and his life will be significant even in the face of the absurd, which sadly, will always be about.

There is nothing, however, to compensate for the spilling of blood, and, admittedly, the presence of the absurd will always be felt. Malraux soon realizes that violence does not abolish human misery; on the contrary, it either prolongs misery, or replaces one wretched condition by another. Violence and Revolution in conquest of liberty, dignity and fraternity become the burial ground where both man and his values repose after suffering excruciating injury or suffocation in the flames of war. The concept of fraternity in battle is broader and more universal, but it can do nothing to extinguish the conditions which reap havoc on man, subjecting him to the whims of fate. The battles which Malraux witnessed influenced the modification of his views on the necessary application of violence to challenge destiny and reduce the absurdity of the world.

Malraux's last heroes continue to do combat; however, they do not enter into the struggle with the same "élan de joie" as did their predecessors. They struggle violently and maturely for there is no other way to eliminate the abuses which humble them before destiny. They also recognize that in reality, the world will never be totally free from oppression, which will oblige man to continually fight to secure his rights, and rectify the human condition. As this is so, man by nature will perfect his abilities at destruc-

tion, and to the flames, flesh and blood will be added brain damage, incurable disease, mutilation and more - all willed by man in his supposed defense of his rights, or willed by other men with aggressive motivation.

Something positive does become clear, however, in the last two novels, and that is the substitution of art and culture as an "anti-destin." Violence cannot hope to perpetuate man; it cannot render him immortal. On the other hand, his creative works eternize him and assist him in scarring the map; they can effectively challenge destiny and defy the absurd by enabling him to succeed his death.<sup>(3)</sup> The Germans of the First World War aid their enemies, the Russians, not out of virile fraternity, but as a result of the shock they experience observing precisely what their violence is capable of doing. Malraux saw man damage irreparably and irremediably his "brothers" during the Spanish Civil War and World War II, and began to comprehend that the inherent nature of man is unchanging, that his propensity towards evil will not be undone. Violence finally becomes detrimental to man, and it is no longer the asset it was once thought to be. Although art does not obliterate torture, murder, etc., it does permit the finer characteristics of man to transcend the generations. Art and the artist are aware of the absurd, and a direct confrontation occurs daily between the newest of the Malraucian heroes and his eternal adversary. This last hero combats alone, strangely enough, but his is not the egotistical, childish defiance of death brought about by fear and unknown terrors. This hero has absorbed all the beautiful qualities of virile fraternity, and has rejected the obsessions

of scarring the map, self-possession, etc. He tries to accord himself harmoniously with the cosmos, but not via escaping man's anguish; he is aware of the pain, and illustrates man's sufferance, and, in so doing, he is neither humbled by destiny nor by the absurd.

The conclusion is that we must draw from ourselves images powerful enough to destroy the absurdity of the human condition. These images must be the product of an enthusiasm as fervent as was that needed to thrust man into virile fraternity. As a young man, Malraux feared death and the absurd; he transferred his fears to his early characters, giving his obsession with death a written outlet. As he matured, he outgrew his "goyaesque" monsters, and decided to select intense, violent activity as his way of combatting the absurd. His first heroes, seekers of immortality, fight as solitary men, hoping to rid themselves of the obsession of death by courting it passionately and violently. They fail for they cannot perpetuate themselves in their challenge of the absurd; they die broken and alone. The Revolutionary heroes do battle for the whole of mankind, aspiring to eradicate all oppression and misery which cripples and humiliates man. They are rewarded with a momentary triumph over the absurd, relieving man's degradations, but they too are unable to achieve victory over death through violence. They appreciate virile combat but are tragically deceived, as was Malraux, by man's penchant for inhumanity and violent cruelty towards man. Finally, the new Malraucian hero is born: the artist. He refuses to surrender to either destiny or to the absurd; he will not get taken in by them. He will not use

violence because he perceives that violence engenders more violence. He does not need to travel to distant locales to test his will over fate. He will be victorious (to an extent) by his designs, which will render him immortal, and serve as proof of the existence of fundamental and eternal man. Malraux's ultimate rejection of violence corresponds to a life that was lived with full intensity, but which saw a metamorphosis at the end of the Second World War. The deceptions lived by the author were responsible for the transition in his life and in his works. He abandoned the novel for the pursuit of esthetics, believing that he too could attain immortality, and successfully challenge the absurd by his works of creative inspiration. He has remained true to this last ideal ever since.

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Violence has existed since the days of primitive man. It is instinctive. Men like to pursue and to kill. Violence attracts violence in a wearying spiral: injustice draws revolt, violence is used to contain violence. Violence alienates man from his fellow men, from himself, from the world. Violence can humble the soul as well as the body; its "modi operandi," threat, constraint, terror, fear, pressure, domination, exploitation, subjugation, and more - reduce man to a non-entity. Although occasionally, one or more of the above can successfully be employed to erase the effects of another, at what cost does this occur?

Even violence as revenge against death is to no avail, for death ultimately conquers all forms of violence, and the hero finds his situation desperate and hopeless. However, where violence is involved in the creative act, where man breaks out of his lethargy to stop his degeneration, where he continually questions the universe and his destiny, where he is thrown into conflictual situations where he must rely on his courage and his audacity, man regains control of his being and denies the abyss.

Most modern writers will admit that, as violence terminates in "absolute death," violence serves no lasting purpose. Meursault is genuinely "the stranger," alien to his gratuitous act of murder, as he is to all else. Sartre's Hugo "sullies his hands," but, again, his reason has nothing whatsoever to do with man's dignity and liberty. Ionesco's "professor" kills some forty students, and again, he serves the absurd, rather than combat it. Perhaps Picasso's "Guernica" best sums up the futility of war, revolution and violence. These will always be employed by the oppressors to oppress; those subjugated, on the other hand, will choose revolution and violence to overcome the tyrant. There is one problem without any possible resolution - the "victimes" and the "bourreaux" are to remain forever with us, as do the omnipresence of death, and the drive to live.

As this is the case, adding to the faces of misery and anguish by acts of irreparable violence is absurd. What many of the modern-day authors, painters and musicians have composed is a picture or a symphony of man's eternal strife, and his plodding

efforts to ameliorate his condition, and, by so doing, they have eternized man, as did Malraux. They have shown that where violence may attain a momentary triumph against the absurd (if it does that at all), it is the actual creative work of man which will best challenge destiny, refusing to allow man to be the perpetual "victime." Picasso's "Guernica" is all the faces of violence; we remember Picasso and his contributions to the world of art and to the civilized world in general, when we view this canvas. The generations to come will learn from Malraux's "canvasses," of the "jeunesse européenne," of the "temptation of the West," of the "farfelu kingdom," "the royal way," and more. They will learn far more through the pages of his life (and far less painfully), than if they were to pursue a course of action similar to his. When they choose to act in the future, perhaps those who have experienced Malraux's works will choose to act less violently, knowing that violence will not threaten the absurd, but that the images we draw from ourselves will.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>In the evolution of his thought, Malraux takes his third revolutionary hero, Kassner, and returns him to the West, for the necessity of violence and intensity can be found anywhere, at any time, wherever man is subjugated. Kyo, Katow, and Kassner fight the absurd in the East and in the West, for unfortunately, conditions are such that man can be vainquished in any part of the world.
- <sup>2</sup>Malraux goes into the experience of prison as a major humiliation in these two novels, and man's obligation to conquer the physical and emotional prisons in which he often finds himself. Prison removes his dignity, and man's life is meaningless without this.
- <sup>3</sup>Fraternal combat is a praise-worthy concept, and heroes such as Magnin, Manuel, Scali, etc. find meaning in life through united battle; however, the violence of fraternal combat which takes away Jaime Alvear's sight, the lower jaw of a child, etc. does not make amends for these losses, and, particularly in the case of the Spanish Civil War, all such losses were in vain.

## APPENDIX A

"...Attacher les Annamites aux arbres et les frapper jusqu'à la mort, c'est un traitement dont, sans contester sa haute valeur administrative, je dirai que la nécessité ne se fait pas sentir. Si la France a demandé aux Gouverneurs des colonies de tout faire pour obtenir l'attachement des populations, elle n'a pas parlé de l'attachement par les pieds, contrairement à ce qu'on croit d'ordinaire au Gouvernement de Cochinchine. Car l'exécution pure et simple d'un Annamite vaut la mise en accusation d'un agent non celle d'un magistrat. Défendons le prestige français. Bien.

...Donc, l'agent N...torture un Annamite pour en obtenir des aveux, dit-il, pour en obtenir de l'argent, dit l'Annamite...

L'Annamite, gravement blessé, va trouver un médecin et lui demande un certificat.

L'agent N se hâte de faire dire par la Sûreté dans tout Baclieu, que le docteur a touché mille piastres pour établir son certificat.

Justement furieux, celui-ci, touché personnellement, amène avec lui l'Annamite à Saigon, réunit trois des meilleurs médecins de la ville, et les prie d'examiner son sujet. Tous trois - je dis - tous trois sont d'accord avec lui.

...le Gouverneur mande à son cabinet le docteur P... à qui il enjoint de 'rentrer dans le rang.'

Donc, il est bien établi que l'agent N...employait la torture avec les Annamites. Des plaintes sont portées, Aucune suite n'est donnée. Ah! si! L'agent est nommé brigadier à Saigon, où, naturellement, il continuera afin de devenir rapidement maréchal-des-logis. L'agent ira voir le Gouverneur. Et, si l'on donne suite aux plaintes, s'il est clair pour tous que cet individu n'est qu'un tortionnaire et un délateur, il exigera du Gouverneur, qui a un tortionnaire à sa droite et un délateur à sa gauche, sa nomination, dès la prochaine session, à la Présidence au Conseil Colonial."

"Eloge de la Torture," Indochine Enchaînée,  
November 2, 1925.

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